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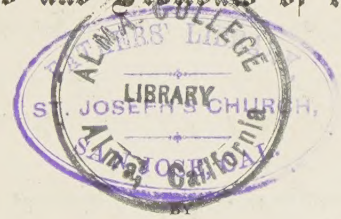
SERMONS

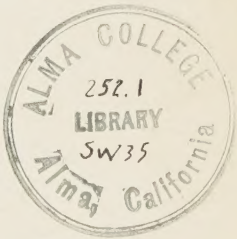
FOR ALL

Sundays and Festivals of the Year.



J. N. SWEENEY, D.D.

MONK AND PRIEST OF THE ENGLISH BENEDICTINE CONGREGATION.



SECOND EDITION.

LONDON: BURNS AND OATES.

1879.

LONDON:
ROBSON AND SONS, PRINTERS, PANCRAS ROAD, N.W.

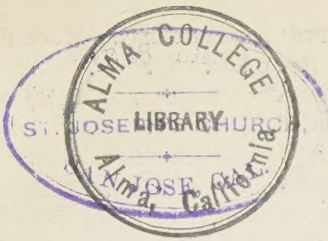
PATRUM-S. I.
SAN JOSE

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In a short notice prefixed to the First Edition, I stated that I had been induced to publish the course of Sermons for Sundays and Festivals at the request of several priests, who assured me that such a work would be acceptable to many of the clergy. The assurance has been fulfilled. The edition was soon exhausted; and there has been so constant a demand for copies that the publishers have not hesitated to undertake a Second Edition. It is in a cheaper form than the First Edition, and in one volume only. This, it is hoped, will bring the work within the reach of a larger circle.

J. N. S.

St. John's Priory, Bath.
February 1879.



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SERMON I.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

ADVENT: A TIME OF PREPARATION.

It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep.

THESE words of the holy and earnest St. Paul are most fittingly brought before us at the commencement of this holy season of Advent. Indeed, the fact of their being chosen by the Church proves their fitness; for the Church, in her guardianship of the sacred Scriptures, and in her responsibility for our souls, always knows how to adapt one of these objects of her care to the other, and selects at the various seasons and festivals what is best suited for the spirit of the time and the wants of her children.

There are two reasons why in Advent there is a special call for that effort which is commanded by the Apostle, and in the words of the Apostle commanded by the Church. It is a time in which are combined the beginning and the end of the year; and that is one reason. And it is the time for preparing for the celebration of the great event which brought joy into the world in the Birth of its Redeemer; and that is the second reason. It is the beginning and the end of the year: the beginning of the ecclesiastical year, and the end of the ordinary calendar year. The beginning is always a time of vigour, and freshness, and activity; for we do not require proverbs, or the experience of others to tell us what our own experience convinces us of,—that we can and do at the outset of any work, whilst its novelty exists, command a spirit and energy which are apt to flag in its progress. And the end, as often almost as the beginning, calls for additional exertion, when we find that we have lost ground to make up, and have to crowd into a short space an amount of labour which ought to have been distributed over a longer period, but which has been deferred and neglected until the end is close at hand. How many, for instance, now at the commencement of the year now so near its end, have made resolutions of fervour and fidelity, which have been but too remissly observed! There is still time for compen-

sation, but there is no time to lose; and therefore it is well that the Apostle and the Church urge us on to activity, by reminding us that we have been slumbering too long, and that *it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep.*

But it is especially as being the time for preparing for the great Christmas solemnity that the admonition is needed, and is urged upon us. Not merely one vigil is to be kept, but we are to spend four weeks of watching. In the same way in which God prepared the world for the Birth of its Redeemer, does the Church prepare us for the annual celebration of this great event.

I. How did Almighty God prepare the world? It is certain that He allowed a long interval to elapse, four thousand years, before the promise made upon the day of the fall met with its fulfilment. This was a time of *sorrow.* It was the season of *deferred hope*, which *brings affliction to the soul.*[1] But well did earth deserve this sorrow, for it had brought it on itself. As our Blessed Lord speaks of the sorrow of a mother in those anxious days which go before the birth of a child, and which is only changed into joy when her child is born, so in those days was the earth looking forward to a joy still withheld, and envying the happier lot of future times, when it should be enabled to open and to bud forth its Saviour.

And it was a time of *promise.* For God was too good and too merciful to leave that sorrow unassuaged. The day of punishment became also a day of hope—deferred, it may be, but still of hope. Just as in these happier days of the new law, we point to the Gospel in which we have the good tidings recorded, towards which we are ever looking back with loving thankfulness, so were the good tidings intimated to the chosen people of God in the days of the older dispensation, when they were bidden to look forward in faith and hopefulness to the future Redeemer, who was to destroy the work of the serpent, and again, by reconciling man with God, open heaven as the inheritance and reward of the faithful. Is not the time of Advent fruitful in recollections of this cheering promise? The Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which, with its Octave, fills up the half of the earlier part of this season, is a festal record of a triumph in which we are all so deeply concerned. The aspirations of the patriarchs, calling upon the heavens to drop down their dew, and upon the earth to hasten on in producing the fruit which was to bring life instead of death into the world, are placed day after day upon our lips. And we shall conclude the holy season, when the promise will be nearer the time of its happy fulfilment, in those joyful anthems of welcome, by which the

[1] Prov. xiii. 12.

Church will express her eager readiness to go forth and meet the Wisdom of God, coming down to bring peace and salvation to man.

It was also a time of *figures;* for by the ordinance of God there were instituted many outward observances, by which the Church of the Old Testament was expressing its faith in good things to come. There is something beautiful, but at the same time something melancholy, in the devotion with which the patriarchs were animated in those olden days: beautiful, inasmuch as there was an expression of deep unshaken faith; but melancholy, because it was faith in something longed for, but not yet possessed by them, as it is possessed by us. One fact is enough to bring home this thought to us. There was no Blessed Sacrament in those days; no Mass, no Holy Communion. There were figures of this reality, but the great reality itself was wanting. There was the manna: there was the paschal lamb: there were the beautiful morning and evening sacrifices: there was the mysterious holy of holies, veiled off from the people, and accessible only to the priesthood. But there was a thicker veil than that which screened off this figurative sanctuary: it was the veil which it would take years or centuries to penetrate; for a long time was to elapse before it was to be rent asunder, and before Christ, the light of their eyes and the breath of their mouth, was to stand in the midst of them, of whom one of the prophets so strikingly declares, *under Thy shadow we shall live among the Gentiles.*[2] Well, therefore, might St. Paul remind the Hebrews that the Law, with all its solemnity, and all the privileges it entailed in comparison with the Gentiles, was, after all, only a *shadow of good things to come.*[3] Well might Isaias, the great evangelist of the old law, call out to God: *Truly Thou art a hidden God;*[4] for He was doubly hidden: hidden in His divinity, upon which no man could look and live;[5] and hidden even in His sacramental life, which as yet had not commenced its career upon earth.

But during all that time, a period of four thousand years, one work was going on: the work of preparation; not of preparation for each individual soul only, in its labours for eternity, but of preparation of the whole Church for its transition into its new state. There was another Exodus in prospect from a state of bondage into the state of *liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.* This was always held in the view of the chosen people by the *Prophets,* whom Almighty God raised up and sent in a continued series, to be announcing the future Redeemer and the good things He was to bring with Him, when the time of promise was realised. *All*

[2] Jer. Lam. iv. 20.
[3] Heb. x. 1.
[4] Is. xlv. 15.
[5] Ex. xxxiii. 20.

sundry times, St. Paul reminds us, *and in divers manners God spoke in times past to the fathers by the Prophets.*[6] These messengers of God, bearing with them their credentials of a divine mission, were the Evangelists of the old Law, and oftentimes in mysterious language, oftentimes in very express and distinct terms, such as those used by Isaias, Jeremias, and Daniel, made known the time, the character, and many of the details of the Person and the work of the Messias. This was one kind of preparation.

And when the time drew nigh in which God was to send His Son, *made of a woman*,[7] as St. Paul reminds the Galatians, *the Woman* herself had to be prepared for her high and privileged office of the Maternity. The first recorded prophecy had told of her, and of the enmities which were ever to subsist between herself and the great seducer of man, who had brought ruin upon the world. Destined in the decrees of God to bear so intimate a relationship to Him, who was to come from the bosom of the Eternal Father into her womb, and through her to pass into this world, she now appears upon earth, going like the Morning Star before the Sun of Justice, and by her birth she brings joy to the universe.[8] Espoused already at an early age to the venerable patriarch St. Joseph, who was to be the shielder of her virginity, and to secure outward honour to her maternity, she is at prayer in her humble dwelling at Nazareth, and praying earnestly, as some of the Fathers tell us, for the speedy redemption of Israel. A bright messenger from heaven comes and makes the great Announcement to her, that her prayers have been heard and granted, that the day of Salvation is at hand; but that she herself is to give her consent to bear the office destined for her at that remote time in the decrees of God, even then when the offer was made and accepted, that the Eternal Son should come upon earth to do the will of His Father. It is the same Angel Gabriel who had been commissioned to foretell to Daniel, and through him to the world, the time of the accomplishment of the great Mystery through which the world was to be redeemed: the same who had come to the parents of the Baptist six months before, and had foretold the wonderful birth of the Precursor of our Lord. She consents, after a wondering hesitation; and at once, through the work of the Holy Ghost, the Word is made Flesh, and dwells amongst us, known and adored by angels, and by the honoured and happy Mother, though as yet for a time unknown and unrecognised upon the earth which He

[6] Heb. i. 1. [7] Gal. iv. 4.

[8] 'Nativitas tua, Dei Genitrix Virgo, gaudium annuntiavit universo mundo: ex te enim ortus est Sol Justitiæ, Christus Deus noster.' Ant. ad Mag. in festo Nat. B.V.M.

was coming to redeem. Is it not fitting, not an accidental but a wise and providential dispensation, that the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the real preparation of the Virgin-Mother, should form an integral portion of the Advent season?

But there is another preparatory act, public and forced upon the world in spite of its forgetfulness, brought before us in the Advent solemnities, and that is the mission and the preaching of *St. John the Baptist.* From the time of Malachias, the last of the series of recorded Prophets, the voice of prophecy sounds not in Israel; and there is a lull before the great commotion which is to ensue. And now comes forth one more wonderful than any who had preceded him: not merely a prophet, but such a prophet that amongst the sons of men none had risen greater than he. He had himself been the object of prophecy; for amongst the events connected with the Messias that had been foretold, was the mission of the Precursor, of whom Malachias had said, as our Blessed Lord Himself quotes from him: *Behold, I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.*[9] Born six months before our Lord, he has prepared himself by a long retirement, sharing most probably, on account of the relationship that existed between the two Mothers, many of the days which were passing on unknown to the world in the Hidden Life at Nazareth. And now we find him emerging from his quiet abode; and the voice of the great Preacher of the desert is awakening many to repentance, and preparing them to hear another voice which is about to commence its utterances, and to share richer blessings which were on the eve of being distributed amongst them. And so the world was not to be taken by surprise, but an active preparation was going on, and was fitting it to go forth and welcome its expected Redeemer.

II. And to go forth and welcome Him is the order given to us now in these days of preparation. *It is the hour to arise from sleep,* and we must now be watching, and eager to gain our share in the blessings which the joyful Christmas festival will bring. You know how anxious our good Mother the Church is at all times for the due celebration of her Festivals, days which are always rich in graces to those who are willing to receive them. She prepares us by the vigil which precedes the solemnity. But for the greater solemnities of Christmas and Easter, it is not one vigil, but a period of vigils which forms the time of preparation. Therefore the holy season of Advent is instituted, in order to fill us with reverential feeling towards the great mystery of the Incarnation, and that our faith and hope and love may be exercised

[9] Mal. iii. 1; Matt. xi. 10.

and increased in regard to what so deeply and intimately concerns each one amongst us. Four weeks are not too long a period of preparation, when we remember what comes at the end of that time. The world was left for four thousand years in its unredeemed state, and it is this period which is symbolised by the four Advent weeks. What is to be our preparation during these days of vigil?

Advent is a time of *penance;* and the ordinary penitential works of fasting and watching are imposed upon us now with exceptional impressiveness. The mourning spirit of the days of the Old Testament is that which well befits this season; and as we hope to share in the joy which is the character of Christmas, we shall appreciate it the more fully, if we do something towards earning it for ourselves. It is in order that we may reap in joy, that the Church commands us to sow in tears; and it is really in order to make us more fully partakers of the reward, which the great solemnity brings with it to those who have done something towards purchasing it for themselves, that the Church addresses us in the words of the Baptist: *Do penance; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*[10] We are not to think that the Church ever imposes upon us penitential works just for their own sake, as if they were the end, and we were to rest in them. They are a means towards an end: they are a condition towards a subsequent reward; and it is for this reason that the Church, so eager to help us on with reference to the end, and to gain us the reward, urges the means and the condition upon us. Little can they deserve of the spiritual blessings of the rich festivals now approaching, who do nothing or make but slight exertions towards deserving them.

And Advent is also a time of *reflection.* See the reason which the Apostle gives, and which the Church in his words alleges for our rousing ourselves from sleep and listlessness. *It is now the hour for us to arise from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we believed;* that is to say, as commentators tell us,[11] we are now nearer to eternity than at the first days of our conversion, when in the fresh fervour which then attended us, we ran on hopefully in the way of salvation. If we were fervent and active then, there is a greater call for fervour and activity now; for the day of our judgment is closer at hand, and we have therefore a more limited time to be preparing for the hour in which our doom is to be decreed. Here you see the connection between the Epistle and the Gospel of this first Sunday of Advent; and how, in the prophetical words of our dear Lord, the Church

[10] Matt. iii. 1. [11] Dr. MacEvilly, and à Lapide in locum.

adds force to the apostolical admonition ; and by the remembrance of the terrors of the future judgment which certainly awaits us all, she awakens us to reflection, and forces upon us that first important step of a return to God. Would that men would think more ! Certainly then they would sin less ; for, *with desolation is the whole earth made desolate, because there is none that considereth in his heart.*[12] If the thought of the last coming of our Blessed Lord ought to awaken reflection within us through fear, the remembrance of His first coming, and the commemoration of that joyful event for which we are preparing, ought in good and generous souls to awaken reflection through love.

Advent is also a time of hope and *prayer*. There is no time which is not a time of prayer ; but there are seasons into which that holy duty seems to enter as a special characteristic. We pray for that which we possess not ; and we pray with hope and increased confidence, accordingly as the future possession seems more likely to be secured to us. Advent is not the time of possession : that time is approaching ; and we are holding out our hands to welcome and embrace it. Our words are words of invitation, and our feelings find their expression in accents of desire and in aspirations towards Him, who *will surely come and will not delay.*[13] And who is it that is to come ? What is to be our reward, when to all expectant and prepared souls, the Church will at the end of the Advent days call out : *Behold, the Bridegroom cometh : go forth and meet Christ our Lord ?* Just as in the old law the patriarchs prayed that God would shorten the time of His anger, and would send Him whom He was to send, so in these holy days of hope and promise, it must be our prayer that God will turn away from us the consequences of our own sins, and will fit us to welcome the Child who is to come as the Messenger and the Prince of Peace. Such is the preparation which the Church commences to urge upon us to-day, when she awakens us from sleep, and bids us place ourselves at once in readiness.

III. At once ! my dear brethren, for this is all-important. It is *now* the hour to arise. It will not do to go on slumbering. The old year is close upon its end, and the new ecclesiastical year, as I reminded you at the beginning, enters this day upon its beautiful career of prayer and ritual. Your preparation, therefore, of penance, reflection, and prayer must be *immediate*. See how the preacher of the desert, the precursor of our Lord, in his earnest and solemn manner, presses this upon those who went out to hear him. *The axe is laid to the root of the tree,*[14] he tells

[12] Jer. xii. 11. [13] Hab. ii. 3. [14] Matt. iii. 10.

them, and it may require only one stroke more to bring it crashing down upon the ground. There is no time for delay. Advent begins to-day; it does not begin to-morrow: and if you put off until to-morrow the forming of resolutions, and the investing yourself with the spirit of a season of quick and earnest preparation, you will be losing grace, and only making your time of preparation shorter, and your chance of being ready the less probable. Now even, during the time of the holy Sacrifice, which is on the point of being offered up as the first-fruits of this season of grace, offer to God the resolutions which He Himself inspires, and lose not a day of a time not too long for a work so important and so holy.

Your preparation must also be *active*. And if it is immediate, it will be active. You are told to arise at once from sleep. The early time of the day, when the night's rest has prepared us for a renewal of labour, is the time when we can command the greatest activity, before the fatigue of hours of work has diminished our energy. The Church does command some effort. The two days of fasting in each week express her principle. She will not be satisfied with merely inward feelings, she wants something more; and she will have us prove our sincerity by manifesting it outwardly. To make the rough ways smooth: to make crooked ways straight: to lower mountains and to raise valleys: all this, which is proverbially the work of Advent, demands something more than merely looking on and doing nothing. We are not to be directors of a work which others are to carry out: we must be the manufacturers of our own fortune. We have much to overcome in the way of sin and sinful habits: we have much to acquire in the way of virtue and fervour; and unless we really begin to do something, and to do it in earnest, as if we meant it, the chances are that we shall be found unprepared, and the joys of Christmas will be lost and sacrificed.

Not immediate and active only must our preparation be, but it must be *effectual* also. What does this mean? There is a kind of work about which we may be active, and yet the labour is ineffectual. Do you not remember the Apostles once saying to our Lord: *Master, we have been labouring all the night, and have taken nothing?*[15] And an expression of St. Paul's may occur to you, where he says: *I so fight, not as one beating the air.*[16] Labour and struggle, however active, do not necessarily imply a successful result: they are only successful when they are effectual, when they do what they are intended to do. Now in spiritual matters we have this advantage, that we can always make our

[15] Luke v. 5. [16] 1 Cor. ix. 26.

labour effectual. We can adopt means which are sure to gain success. Does not St. Paul say, that he ran *not as at an uncertainty*?[17] And what makes us certain is, that we labour not alone, but are always, when we so wish, helped by that Grace with which we can do all things. The Grace of God, then, is that which will make our preparation effectual. Grace, you were told in your Catechism in your childhood, and you have been reminded of it in the constant admonitions of the Church, is gained 'principally by prayer and the holy Sacraments.' Pray, then, and you are sure to be prepared. Dispose yourselves for the holy Sacraments, and your preparation cannot be ineffectual. Such, then, is the lesson of Advent; and if we only learn it and put it in practice, what a happy and rich lesson will it prove!

O, my dear brethren, what an alternative is before you in connexion with the joyful and glorious day which is so soon to dawn upon us! If you are unprepared, the door of the poor but happy stable of Bethlehem will be closed against you, and the first sound of the Child's voice which will reach you will be: *I know you not.* And this for no other reason but because you are unprepared. Angels, shepherds, kings, Joseph and Mary will be there, around the Expected of nations and the Joy of the world; and you will be unwelcome and unadmitted: just because you are unprepared. But if it is otherwise, if that which depends upon yourself is done, as it can be done, and ought to be done; if you go prepared, what a joy and blessing will await you! All that are around the holy crib will then bid you welcome; and coming like them with acts of faith, hope, and love, you will take up your place in that holy spot, where all loving hearts will be gathered together, and will be strengthened, comforted, and enriched by Him, who is the source of every blessing, and the bestower and rewarder of every virtue.

[17] 1 Cor. ix. 26.

SERMON II.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

Hail, full of grace, our Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou amongst women! Luke i. 28.

THAT Divine Providence, which orders all things wisely, has in Its arrangement of the Liturgy of the Church so disposed, that the Festival of the Immaculate Conception of the ever-blessed Mother of God should occur in the early part of the holy season of Advent. The fitness of such an arrangement at once presents and recommends itself to us. For as Advent is our time of preparation for welcoming the Only-begotten Son of God, on the occasion of His Birth into this world, the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of that Son made Man was one of the preparatory acts upon the part of the Eternal Father, when He designed the wonderful Mystery of the Incarnation, and decreed that the Word should be made Flesh and should dwell amongst us. And in asking you to enter into the spirit of the Church in connexion with this solemnity, what words can I use more appropriate than those first used by the Archangel Gabriel, and so valued by the Church? It is she who on this Festival addresses the Immaculate Mother, and salutes her in accents of congratulation, because of her high and exceptional privilege. And she calls upon each of us to join in the salutation, and to express our joy on the celebration of this happy solemnity. When the words of our address to her were first spoken, they came from heaven to earth: they were words of preparation, and formed the first announcement of the close fulfilment of a Mystery, to which for four thousand years the world had been looking forward with anxious hope. Now they return in glad chorus taken up by thousands of voices, and go back from earth to heaven, bearing with them our acts of thanksgiving for the fulfilment of a Mystery, which, through the consent given by her to whom the Angel was sent, has already accomplished our redemption, and is fitting us for our future re-

ward. Preparing, then, for the annual commemoration of the deep Mystery which is the object of the Festival of Christmas, how happy are we to turn our thoughts to her, upon whom devolved the office of the Maternity, and who was prepared for that office by that plenitude of Grace, which implied a perpetual freedom from the touch of sin, and consequently the privilege of an Immaculate Conception!

That we may the more fully realise this Festival, and make it to be more abundantly profitable in blessings to us, let us try to understand as clearly as may be what is implied by the fact solemnised to-day. The Church does not celebrate Festivals in honour of merely speculative ideas. She is too practical for that; and so, when she institutes a solemnity and bids us join in celebrating it, she places something real before us, and would have us study and appreciate the reality. We shall see that the Immaculate Conception is a reality, as far as the ever-blessed Virgin Mary was concerned; and that it is even now a reality as far as we ourselves are concerned.

I. What we mean by the Immaculate Conception as a reality to her, upon whom devolved the office of Maternity to the Word made Flesh, is simply this. She was *conceived* without sin: not merely *born* without sin; but at that earlier period which precedes birth, whenever that period may be, in which in a human being the rational soul is infused into the body which is fitted to receive it, at the instant of the infusion of her soul into her body, the stain of sin which at such a moment affects others, was, through the merits of her Son, withheld from her. Thus, as the Church says in the Collect of this Festival, Almighty God, through the foresight of the death of His Son, preserved the Mother from every stain of sin.[1] She stood alone in her connexion with the Mystery of the Incarnation, and she had a privilege peculiar to herself. The Immaculate Conception, you thus see, is not a *divine* Conception. It does not mean that she was conceived, as our Blessed Lord was afterwards conceived in her womb, through the supernatural coöperation of the Holy Ghost, so that her body was miraculously conceived as His was. The Conception of her Son was of course Immaculate, but it was more than that, it was Divine also. He was conceived in the womb of a Virgin-Mother, through the operation of the power of the Holy Ghost; for so said the Angel Gabriel, on the day of the Annunciation: *the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and therefore also the Holy One that shall be*

[1] 'Deus, qui .... ex morte ejusdem Filii Tui prævisâ eam ab omni labe præservasti.'

born of thee shall be called the Son of God.[2] The Body of Jesus was supernaturally and miraculously framed out of the substance of His Mother by a Divine operation; the body of Mary was formed naturally, as other bodies are formed. Joachim and Anne were her parents, as our parents are ours. Through this *active* conception, as it is called, Mary descended from the tribe of Judah, and from the royal house of David, as we read in her genealogy. But at the instant of *passive* conception, when that creative act took place, in which her soul, made out of nothing by the great Creator of every human soul, was by the hands of God infused into her body naturally formed, her soul, which, unless that same Creator had ordained and willed otherwise, would by its contact with the body have incurred the stain which contaminates other children of Adam, was preserved from that stain, and thus she was conceived Immaculate. This, the Church tells us, was her exceptional privilege.

For you know, my dear brethren, what for a moment I must bring back to your recollection, that through the fall of our first parents, *sin*, which *by one man came into this world*,[3] was transmitted to the descendants of Adam, *in whom all have sinned*.[4] Therefore we all have to say with the Psalmist: *for, behold, I was conceived in iniquity, and in sins did my mother conceive me*.[5] Whether or no this may seem to us a very severe visitation upon us, the fact is, that sin is transmitted, and its stain is contracted by each of us at the moment in which we receive our personal existence, and become children of Adam. But the Church teaches us, that as before the law of the transmission of sin was decreed and came into operation, Mary had been already predestined to be the Mother of Him by Whom sin was to be removed, she was exempt on the principle affirmed by St. Paul, in the same place in which he speaks of the introduction of sin into the world, namely, that *sin was not imputed when the law was not*.[6] The contagion of sin never touched her; and so at her Conception, by her destiny in the decrees of God, she was Immaculate.

Pursue in your thoughts her career in her exceptional connexion with the Mystery of the Incarnation, and her Immaculate Conception presents itself more strongly before you. As Mother of the Incarnate Word, she held a position peculiarly her own, and essentially different from that which any other human being can hold. If our Lord was destined to be born, as He was, He could have had but one Mother. And this one Mother is the Mother of Him, Who is to all of us the source of Grace, and Merit, and

[2] Luke i. 35. [3] Rom. v. 12. [4] Ibid.
[5] Ps. l. [6] Rom. v. 13.

Glory. Grace comes upon others after sin has first claimed possession of them: her exception was, that Grace claimed its place in her soul at the first moment of her existence. Her Son merited this exception for her; and hence the glory of her being conceived without sin. To have been merely born without sin would not have been an exception in her own case alone; for the prophet Jeremias,[7] and the precursor of our Lord, St. John the Baptist,[8] shared in this exception. Something more was apportioned to her; and sin, which for a time had touched these two privileged souls, though removed from them before birth, never touched her for a single instant, and so she stands alone in her absolute exemption from the stain of sin.

And when we add to this thought the remembrance of the relationship which her connexion with the Mystery of the Incarnation implied with each of the three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity, her Immaculate Conception stands out in bolder relief before us. It was the Eternal Father who chose her to be the Mother of His Son. To Him therefore she is exceptionally a child. *We* may all call Him Father, for we have been ordered to do so; what may not *she* have called Him, Who raised her to the relationship with His Son upon earth, which He bears to that Son in heaven? She is a creature, and therefore a child of God; but in the eyes of the Eternal Father she is an object of especial favour, because chosen and predestined amongst all the daughters of Eve for so high an office as that of the Maternity. And what does not this Maternity imply with regard to the Son! It implies essentially an exceptional relationship, the relationship of mother to a child. We may have many friends and acquaintances: we can have but one mother; and our mother is to us, to each of us, what no one else can be. She, the Mother of the Word made Flesh, had to reverse the work of Eve; and as Eve, when looked upon by Adam, from whose substance she had been formed, was addressed by him, as bearing about her what she had received from him, so in like manner could Mary look upon the Holy One born of her, and say to Him: *Thou art bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.*[9] Whosoever believes in the Mystery of the Incarnation does, and must, believe this, and must agree with St. Paul's declaration, that *when the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son,* MADE OF A WOMAN.[10] Thus the Body which suffered for us, the Precious Blood which was shed for us, were from her. She was their source and origin; and ought she not with such a relationship to have been pure and immaculate? And

[7] Jer. i. 5.
[8] Luke i. 44.
[9] Gen. ii. 23.
[10] Gal. iv. 4.

what was her relationship with the Holy Ghost, that Spirit which inhabiteth every soul when in a state of Grace? Let the archangel Gabriel tell us: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.*[11] Hence she is the chosen Spouse of the Holy Spirit, and He who searcheth and knoweth all things, had found in her the fittest object within which to work that wonderful Mystery. If, then, she is the favoured Child of the Eternal Father, the privileged Mother of the Eternal Son, and the elected Spouse of the Holy Spirit, does not this threefold relationship imply an exception in the order of Grace, and suggest the fitness of the Immaculate Conception?

And look again to the highest order of created beings, the holy angels, and see what was their tribute to her perfection in Grace. They, being confirmed in the grace attending upon their original creation, had never been touched by sin. In their holy occupation before the throne of the Almighty Ruler of heaven and earth, singing His praises above, and coming down as His *ministering spirits, to minister to them who are to receive the inheritance of salvation,*[12] yet they acknowledge one creature as superior to themselves; and one of their highest order, one of those standing nearest to the throne of God, comes down to salute her with the title of Full of Grace. Think for a moment on the full meaning of this salutation, and see what results it suggests. The archangel Gabriel, one of the Seraphim, who had said of himself, when sent on an earlier message bearing upon the Incarnation: *I am Gabriel, who stand before God;*[13] one, therefore, who knew what Grace was, for he was always contemplating its Source in the beatific vision, salutes her in the terms of his commission, for he was sent by God for that purpose: *Hail, Full of Grace!* That is to say, as one of the closest students of sacred scripture, the great father of the sacred scripture, as he may well be called, Origen, interprets: Hail, thou that hast always been full of grace, 'never infected by the breath of the venomous serpent.' Is it not right for the Church upon earth to feel and to be in harmony with the angels in heaven, and to salute her in the same expressive and inspired terms?

But it is not mere enthusiasm which carries the Church away in her admiration for her, whom the Blessed Trinity delighted to honour, and whose praise the highest angels looked upon it as a privilege to declare. In matters of faith the Church is influenced by some other feeling besides that of enthusiasm, and instructs us through the Word of God committed to her care. She opens before us the first recorded prophecy, and shows us how there the

[11] Luke i. 35. [12] Heb. i. 14. [13] Luke i. 19.

Mother is associated with the Son in destroying the serpent's work, when he brought sin upon mankind. For in cursing the serpent God adds these words to the curse: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed.*[14] In the dogmatical definition of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, we are told that the Fathers of the Church teach that in this oracle is announced the Redeemer and His Mother, and that there is one common hatred on the part of the devil against both Son and Mother, a constant strife, never ceasing, in which there is to be no truce, and therefore it is expressed in the plural: *enmities*, not enmity. No alliance for an instant exists, and neither Son nor Mother is ever, even for a moment, under the power of sin, in a state of submission to the author of evil. What the first book of scripture declares prophetically, the last book describes symbolically; but teaching precisely the same truth of strife on the part of the evil one against Son and Mother. The woman is brought before us *clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet.* She is about to bring forth a male child, and *the dragon, the old serpent, who is called the devil and satan, who seduceth the whole world,*[15] is lying in wait to devour the Son on His birth, and to destroy the hopes of man and the joy and honour of the Mother. Thus the Incarnation, the Mystery decreed to destroy sin, includes Mother as well as Son in common and constant enmities against the serpent.

This is the real principle by which the Church is influenced in placing before us the doctrine, and in observing the Festival, of the Immaculate Conception. She views the Mystery of the Incarnation in its integrity; and nothing is of small importance to her which bears upon this Mystery. She shows us therefore how, in prophecy, Mother and Son were associated together: how they existed in union with each other in the decrees of God. When the Prophet Isaias told of the same Mystery, see how the Mother holds her place: *Behold, the Virgin shall conceive, and shall bring forth a Son, and His Name shall be called Emmanuel.*[16] The Holy Ghost, 'who spoke by the Prophets,' as the Nicene Creed declares, speaks also through the Church; and what Prophets foretold to her honour, the Church defines and teaches, and so protects the privilege of the Mother for the sake of her Son, and is glad again and again to take up the Angel's address, to proclaim her, *Full of Grace*, chosen and *blessed amongst women.* Who that loves and values the Mystery of the Incarnation can feel anything but an attraction towards a truth, which seems so much in harmony with that great event, which has been decreed and has been

[14] Gen. iii. 15. [15] Rev. xii. 9. [16] Is. vii. 14.

accomplished in order to give glory to God, and to bring peace and blessings upon man? Holding an exceptional position in connexion with this Mystery, the holy Mother of the Incarnate One has a fulness of grace beyond all others; and this is what the Church, in her honour, wishes us to commemorate in the solemnity of this day.

II. We can well imagine that the Immaculate Conception is everything to her, the happy and privileged subject of such a Grace; but I have also promised to show you what it is likewise to us. How do we share in the consequences of such a favour? The fact of the Church instituting the Festival of to-day is the foundation of our answer. For one motive which influences the Church in her Festivals is the good of her children, and she has seen this good in connexion with this day's solemnity. We are now, in this Advent season, engaged in our work of preparation for the great Festival to which Advent is an introduction; and the Immaculate Conception enters into our sympathy, for it reminds us of one of Almighty God's preparatory acts towards the Birth of His Son. If He, the Eternal Father, would not allow the accomplishment of a Mystery, which so much concerned His own glory, without the intervention of preliminary steps, and the due disposing of each person who was to bear a part in the fulfilment of that Mystery, what is to be thought of those who allow this time of preparation to pass by unheeded, and who seemingly presume to think themselves sufficiently disposed to celebrate the Christmas solemnity without any previous care or effort?

On the same principle which we have already affirmed, that the Immaculate Conception was a fitting privilege of the Mother of the Word made Flesh, because of her connexion with the Mystery of the Incarnation, we acknowledge some share in what was the result of that connexion. The Incarnation does concern us: it is everything to us: it is the source of Grace and blessing; and it has been the means of our Redemption, and of our regaining the once lost claim to heaven. To say that Mary is the Mother of our own dearest Saviour, is to say that we are bound, as we love Him, to be interested about the honour of one whom He, as her Son, so highly honoured. And if He thought and decreed that her Immaculate Conception was a fitting privilege for her, from whom He was to receive the Body which was to suffer and the Precious Blood which was to be shed for us, why shall not we rejoice at the bestowal of such a Grace, and feel that it is our own Mother who is honoured by him, Who has become through her the sharer of our humanity? For in becoming Man, in becoming through Mary a child of Adam, our Blessed Lord has become a

brother to us, and has given us a share in the Maternity of Mary. It is the Immaculate Conception of our own Mother, then, that we celebrate in this Festival, and therefore it does concern us.

What, again, are we taught in the doctrine of the Communion of Saints,—that exalting doctrine which inspires ennobling thoughts into the mind of every Christian? If it is in accordance with human nature, that each man loves his country and glories in its history, that he regards its heroes as being connected with himself through the common bond which unites them together, does not religion elevate us to think of our fellowship with the Saints of God, and to glory in what concerns them, because at the same time it does so truly affect ourselves? Heaven is more really our country than is the clime in which we have accidentally had our lot cast here below. *We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come.*[17] The Saints are our brethren: *you are the fellow-citizens of Saints*, says St. Paul, *and the domestics of God.*[18] In them our own human nature is honoured and exalted; and every grace that is given to them, every merit that is acquired by them, and every degree of glory with which they are crowned, in some way reflect upon ourselves, and call upon us to praise and to thank Him, who to all of us is the common Author of every blessing. We thank God for His own great glory: *Gratias agimus Tibi propter magnam Gloriam Tuam.* We praise Him in His Saints: *Laudate Dominum in Sanctis ejus.*[19] And so the honour of the Mother of God and the Queen of Saints calls for our thanksgiving and praise, and is a cause of our joy.

More directly again, I might even say for a more selfish motive, does the glory of the Immaculate Conception affect us; for it increases her intercessory power. Take St. James's principle, and apply it: *The prayer of the just availeth much.*[20] If Elias, as the same Apostle proceeds to show, could, because he was just, close and open the heavens to refuse or grant their rain to the earth: if Moses, because of his fidelity, could compel Almighty God, seemingly against a fixed determination, to show mercy when He had declared that He would refuse it:[21] if those friends of Job, who had shown themselves so cruel in their friendship as to taunt him in his hour of affliction, were sent by God to ask the intercession of Job in their behalf;[22] are we not encouraged in the thought and conviction that one of absolute purity, one who never for an instant was aught else but Full of Grace, must be what the Church calls her, 'Virgin most powerful,' and that her prayers must have great efficacy before the throne of

Heb. xiii. 14. [18] Eph. ii. 19. [19] Ps. cl.
James v. 16. [21] Exod. xxxii. 10. [22] Job. xlii. 8.

God? When the mother of Solomon, in the first hours of his accession to the throne of his father, came and sought a favour, how beautiful was the answer of her son: *My mother, ask, for I must not turn away thy face!*[23] Can He, who chose His own Mother, fitted her for her office, and rewarded her because she so lovingly and faithfully exercised the office in His regard, turn away her face and refuse her request? Hence we see how well-grounded was the confidence of Saints in her intervention, and how orthodox is the answer given in the Catechism, when to the question: 'Why does the Church show such honour to the Blessed Virgin?' we are taught to answer: 'Because she is the Immaculate Mother of God.' This, then, is a day of special joy to us, because we celebrate a Grace and a Glory which really affect ourselves.

There is yet one more benefit which the Immaculate Conception confers upon us. It shows us a contrast, painful and humiliating, but yet instructive and suggestive to us. On one side, contemplate her absolute sinlessness: on the other, our many and various sins and infidelities to grace. She is but a creature: yet how perfect! we are her fellow-creatures, and what are we? Grace made her what she was: Grace has been given to us, not indeed in the same plenitude, but it has been given to us, far beyond our desert, and how fruitless has it been, because of our own want of coöperation! And are we to go on, faithless and ungrateful to the end? How is the Christmas Festival to find us? Here is a suitable Advent question; and it arises from the Feast we are celebrating to-day.

So, my dear brethren, the Festival of the Immaculate Conception is to us, as to the holy Mother of God, a reality. It instructs, it comforts, it exalts and encourages us. It helps us on in our Advent work of preparation, and is contributing solidly and practically to our efforts towards gaining the blessings which are held out to us. And may she, Full of Grace and Blessed amongst women, deign to accept from our poor cold hearts an assurance of our joy, because of her high and exceptional privilege! Blessed be the Mother of God, immaculately conceived! And may her prayers, so powerful because of her freedom from sin, gain for us what we so much need, and what through her intercession we will ever ask with confidence—a more perfect pardon for past sin, a greater security against future falls, an increased love for God, and the gift of Final Perseverance!

[23] 3 Kings ii. 20.

SERMON III.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE MISSION OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

The Jews sent to John to ask him: Who art thou?

On three of the Sundays of Advent the Church brings before us in the Gospel, the person and the history of the preaching of St. John the Baptist. And it is most appropriate that she should do so; for in the same way as St. John went before Christ, in order, by his preaching and his baptism, to prepare His way, so does this holy time come before Christmas, in order to prepare us to welcome our dear Lord at the time of His coming amongst us, and to dispose us for receiving with greater profit the blessings with which that solemnity is always attended. The venerable figure of the Baptist is one which stands forward in clear prominence in the sacred scripture; and owing to his destiny, to his sanctity, to the praise given to him and the respect evinced towards him by our Blessed Lord, he stands and always has stood prominently forward amongst the Saints of the Church. During this sacred time of Advent we seem to be living in his company, to be following him about in his ministry, to be listening to his preaching, to be visiting him in his prison, in a word to be under his influence and his guidance. To-day we feel that we are amongst those who went out from Jerusalem to ask him the question: *Who art thou?* And we listen attentively to his answer, and to the explanation that he gives of his work and his mission. He came to give testimony of Christ, and the Holy Spirit also gave testimony of him. Let us attend to these two testimonies. First we will take the testimony which has been given of John: it will be an answer to the question: *Who art thou?* Then we shall see how faithful he was in fulfilling the office assigned to him as the Precursor of the Word Incarnate, in bearing testimony of Christ.

I. The testimony which the sacred scripture gives of St. John is not limited to the New Testament. When he answered the

question put to him in the Gospel of to-day, Who art thou? he referred to what had been said of himself by the Prophet Isaias: *I am the voice of one crying in the desert: Make straight the way of the Lord.*[1] And when our Blessed Lord, as we read in the Gospel of last Sunday, explained to the multitude that was about Him, who St. John was, and what was his mission, He quoted the words of the Prophet Malachy: *Behold, I send my Angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.*[2] Nor is the testimony, even in the New Testament, limited to his outward work in his preaching and ministerial labours; but what was the case with our Blessed Lord was the case with him also. His birth is miraculously provided and announced. The same archangel Gabriel, who came from heaven to announce to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of our Lord her destiny, and Who was to be her Son, is the messenger to Zachary, the father of the Baptist, and declares to him: *Thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.*[3] A great grace is given to him also before his birth; for at the time of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin to the mother of the Baptist, he is sanctified and leaps for joy in his mother's womb, thus sharing the privilege which the prophet Jeremias declares to have been bestowed upon himself,[4] as the figure of the Precursor. For this reason it is that the Church celebrates a feast in honour of his birth, which is not done in regard to any other Saint except the Immaculate Mother of our Blessed Lord. In the beginning of the holy Gospel of St. Luke, the wonders which preceded his birth, and which accompanied his circumcision, are recorded in great detail. The name John, which signifies Grace, is by Divine dispensation assigned to him; fitly indicating his connexion with that great Mystery which was to be the means of bringing back grace into a sinful world.

The same mysterious silence also, in which the hidden life of our dear Lord is enveloped, extends over the earlier years of the life of the Baptist. As he was born six months before our Lord, of a cousin of our Blessed Lady, and was destined in later life to act so prominent a part in introducing the Messias to the world which He had come to redeem, we cannot help feeling that as the Gospel in its written record gives the history of both, it intends to associate both together in its silence also, and to intimate that the same hidden life was shared by both. There it was that our Blessed Lord would be preparing St. John for his own work of preparing the world, and that he would have become fitted by an

[1] Is. xl. 3. [2] Mal. iii. 1; Matt. xi. 10.
[3] Luke i. 13. [4] Jer. i. 5.

increase of wisdom and grace for the high and noble career that was destined for him. Immediately before he enters upon his missionary work, he is represented as living in the retirement of the desert, and in solitude and self-denial he fits himself to go out and preach to a distracted and sensual world. The world is astonished, and marvels who it can be that so sternly comes forward to rebuke it; and hence it is that the messengers are sent to ask the question: *Who art thou?*

Now we come to his mission, and the great teacher of the Incarnation introduces him with the words: *There was a man sent from God whose name was John.* This is the testimony of one John in favour of another: of the Evangelist in favour of the Baptist. He is no self-appointed teacher: he comes with a divine mission, and after a long and careful preparation. He does not obtrude himself before the world, but rather lets the world seek him, than he seeks it. He stands at the outskirts of the desert, just enough to be seen and heard, and shrinks back again into his favourite retirement; whilst men almost in spite of themselves are drawn after him to listen to his sermons upon penance and preparation. As contrition precedes pardon, he teaches the world that the time of pardon is at hand, and therefore that the time of repentance is no longer to be deferred. Publicans and soldiers come to be instructed, and to them he gives an assurance that they will be admitted to forgiveness. He is anticipating the merciful labours of One who was soon to go amongst sinners and make them saints; and as a preliminary to the sacramental system which Christ was to inaugurate, he baptises those whom he converts, and acquires from that work his name of the Baptist.

So holy was he that he was mistaken for the Messias, and he had to disclaim the honour, by protesting that he was unworthy, not only to bear the name, but even to stoop and loosen the latchet of the shoe of Him that did bear it. So independent was he and regardless of the person of man, that he hesitated not in his fortitude openly and strongly to rebuke a dissolute king, who, pretending to be faithful to the Jewish law, did not shrink from violating the sanctity of its marriage enactments. *It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife,*[5] he said to the wicked Herod; and he reaps the crown of his intrepidity by imprisonment and martyrdom.

But it is our Blessed Lord's testimony which especially exalts him and holds him up to the praise of the Church. Great as the prophets were, greater still is he; for so says our Lord: *more*

[5] Matt. xiv. 4.

than a prophet; and *amongst the sons of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.*[6] And to show respect to him and to give a sanction to his preaching, our Blessed Redeemer does not disdain to go into the Jordan, to stoop down and be baptised by him. This is, therefore, really the case with St. John. He was a Christian before Christianity was established: an Apostle before Apostles were called: a virgin in life before the evangelical perfection in favour of virginity was praised and recommended by our Lord, and before the perpetual virginity of the Immaculate Mother had been manifested to the Church: a martyr before the era of martyrdom had been inaugurated: a saint canonised and held up for veneration before sanctity had been announced as a distinguishing note of the Church of Christ. Such is the character of St. John as placed before us in the Gospel, and as described by Him who never spoke vain words of flattery, but who, as the future judge of all men, anticipated during His life what He was at the end of the world to declare to be the happy lot of His faithful Precursor.

Does not the Church do well, then, in holding up for our admiration, and as an example to us, this great and privileged saint? For you know, my dear brethren, how prominently she always does place him before us. She assigns in her hierarchical order of saints and angels the first place to him after the orders of blessed spirits; even before St. Joseph and the chosen pillars of the Church, the Apostles. This is his place in the Confiteor, in the litanies of the saints, in the rubrical arrangement of the suffrages and commemoration of saints. And why should not the Church give due praise to him, whom her own Founder loved to honour? Especially does it seem appropriate in this season of preparation, to think of him who was sent before our Lord to prepare His way, and who by his example and the memory of his preaching, and, we must feel confident, by his prayers also, is helping us to make a good use of a holy time, which we may most fittingly place under his patronage.

II. And what was John's testimony of Christ? It behoves us to study what it was, because his especial mission was to bear testimony; and in one way or another it is a task which devolves upon every one of us. *This man came for a witness to give testimony of the light, that all men might believe through him. He was not the light, but he came to give testimony of the light.*[7] These are the words in which the Evangelist speaks of his mission. And the Prophets who foretold his coming, as we have already seen from the declaration of our Blessed Lord, and his own

[6] Matt. xi. 9, 11. [7] John i. 7, 8.

answer to the question, *Who art thou?* had spoken of him as an angel and a messenger, entrusted with a commission and an evidence which he was to manifest to the world. An apostolical work was marked out for him, but more difficult than that which was assigned to the Apostles, because there were fewer outward evidences of his mission to which he could point as arguments in his behalf.

In many ways his work must have appeared, when judged in the light of the world to which he was sent to preach, as thankless and unpromising. He had to preach about One who was unknown and rejected. Does he not say in to-day's Gospel, in answer to the question put to him: *There hath stood in the midst of you One whom you know not?* One of whom it is elsewhere said: *He was in the world, and the world knew Him not: He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.*[8] Here was an advantage which the Apostles at least had: they preached after Christ: they could point to facts: they could quote words and refer to miracles which had been spoken and done: the Resurrection had taken place in their days, and that sufficed to them as an answer to every objection brought against the mysteries which they had to make known. Moreover, what was a great source of strength and a secret of encouragement to the Apostles, they had the example of their Master to look back upon. In their humiliations and trials they remembered what His had been. Calvary inspired them with zeal and resignation; and they remembered how a Cross had been borne by Him, who set them an example how to bear their own, and they had been told what would be the certain reward of their patience and perseverance. But to St. John, in his work of bearing testimony, all this was wanting, because he had to bear his burden before Christ, whilst others had to take up their cross and follow Him.

The testimony given by John in favour of our Blessed Lord was free from all self-seeking, and was associated with great self-denial. He did not preach himself, nor seek in any way his own advantage. The world could not help being struck by seeing in him signs of sanctity which were very unusual. Many years had passed away, even four centuries, since the last of the Prophets, Malachy, had appeared, to give a voice of warning, and by holiness of life associated with a solemn office, to rouse the people of God to a sense of duty towards Him. It was now thought that God had again raised up a prophet, or that Elias had returned to perfect the work which his mysterious assumption had broken in upon, or that even it was the long-promised Messias who had

[8] John i. 10, 11.

come in the person of John. And so, when the messengers who came to him asked him who he was, they followed up their question by inquiring whether he was the Christ, or Elias, or a prophet. To all he gives, in truth and humility, the answer that he was not; but that he was an instrument in the hands of God to announce One far greater than himself, whose minister he was even unworthy to call himself. Although it may seem to us that it required no great effort of humility to deny his claim to titles which really did not belong to him, yet this is the real fault of all those who sin by pride, that they take credit to themselves for what is not their own, and are only too glad to be believed to be greater than they really are.

Self-denial, in the great austerities which he practised, was another feature in the testimony of St. John. Our Lord wishes this practice to be found in His preachers and in His children, and He taught it to them by example. St. John, who had not yet this example to encourage him, though in his hidden life he must have learnt it from its great Teacher, yet having to prepare the world for the lessons of the Cross, first carried them out in his own life. He is described to us by St. Matthew as coming out from the desert of Judæa to preach his gospel of penance: *he had his garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins: and his meat was locusts and wild honey.*[9] He knew that the One whom he was announcing had shared his privations and hard living, and had been worse sheltered than the beasts of the forest and the birds of the air. Most fitting was it that he should be a humble, poor, and suffering preacher of a humble, poor, and suffering Master. So his testimony was one of example as well as of word, and was well calculated to diminish the surprise of the world, when its Lord was to come and introduce Himself to it in such an unworldly and humble form.

Again, the testimony of St. John was not silenced nor intimidated by the opposition of men. It yielded not to the powerful argument of human respect. What St. Paul was able to say of himself, that it mattered little to him how he was judged by man,[10] served as a principle to the intrepid and resolute Precursor. To all he preached the same lessons of morality, justice, and penance, whatever might be the consequences to himself. One who bears testimony of God ought to be willing to do his work even at the expense of martyrdom. To a certain extent the offices are synonymous. A martyr is a witness: one who bears testimony. And to every Christian such a duty is taught by words which were spoken as of general application by our dear Lord: *Every one*

[9] Matt. iii. 4. [10] 1 Cor. iv. 3.

that shall confess Me before men, I will confess him before My Father who is in heaven.[11] And upon all, as well as upon St. John, is the obligation imposed of making the noble profession of Christian faith and maxims, by word, by work, and by example, and of not flinching from this profession when the honour of God and of His Church demands it from us.

Why do I say this, my dear brethren? Are we, you may ask, appointed preachers in the Church, that the zealous and intrepid and self-sacrificing spirit of the great preacher of the desert should be held up for our imitation? Yes, you are. Even you, every one of you, you are called upon to imitate him in the work of giving testimony. And in the special circumstances of trial in which we find the Church and her venerable Head involved in these days, the example of the Baptist is forcibly placed before you. That you have to preach at all times by good example, is of course an elementary truth, which needs not now any development in urging it upon you. It is like a self-evident truth to a Christian. And that you have to preach by work, by activity, by acts of self-denial, is a lesson necessarily implied by the spirit of the holy season of Advent, in which the name of the Baptist is so often brought before us.

But there are times in which the testimony of word as well as of work is demanded of us. There are times in which the world puts the question straight to us: *Who art thou?* And it is our duty at such times to give an answer: to say what we are not, and what we are. Do not misunderstand me, my dear brethren: and do not think I am counselling you to be parading unnecessarily your religious convictions upon others, and to be obtruding out of season your reasons for adhering to the Church, and for professing the glorious faith of a Catholic. There is a time to be silent, and there is a time to speak. The time for being silent occurs more frequently than the time for speaking; and the testimony of work and example, without words, is oftentimes exclusively demanded of you. You may do harm sometimes by speaking, especially in a controversial spirit, upon questions in which others unfortunately differ from you. And there is a mistaken zeal, a zeal without discretion, of which some make a display, when they boast of their religion, and condemn uncharitably others to whom the Grace which they have received may not have been vouchsafed. To boast of being a Catholic, and to live as a good practical Catholic ought to live, does not at all mean one and the same thing. Not unfrequently words and work are found to be in inverse proportion; and the louder are a man's

[11] Matt. x. 32.

words in making a display of his faith, the less fervent may his practice be in the duties attached to his faith.

But there are times when silence is cowardly, and when it may be interpreted as giving consent to false maxims and principles. What is the attitude at the present moment of the Head of the Church, the Vicar of our Blessed Lord, in presence of the world? He is humbled: he is outraged: he has been robbed of his own; and the world for the moment seems to be triumphing. In order to justify its acts of rapine and sacrilege, it assumes even an air of virtue, and expresses itself in words approving of evangelical poverty, and pronounces such a state to be most in accordance with the position of the Vicar of our Lord, the chief representative upon earth of Him, by whom *kings reign and the mighty decree justice.*[12] When Herod wished to make himself more firm upon his throne, he took cruel steps towards removing One, whom he feared as a possible rival: hence the Massacre of the Innocents, and the Flight into Egypt,—consequences of his power and his determination to maintain it, in spite of every principle of right. And when the Herods of the present time avail themselves of an opportunity which the wickedness of the age has placed before them, and seize from the Holy Father possessions to which he has a claim as sacred as ever any sovereign had to dominions over which he rules, the world approves of the robbery, and pretends to justify it on the plea of expediency. Sometimes even Catholics are influenced by the arguments adduced in the organs of the press, and have been known to speak disloyally of the rights of the Holy See, and to hazard opinions against the Temporal Power. It is an occasion for bearing testimony in favour of our Lord, and these unworthy children bear testimony against Him. What would St. John have done? Against another Herod, who broke the law of God, he used an expression which the world never hears patiently from the Church: *It is not lawful;* and he was imprisoned and beheaded. He bore testimony, and became a martyr. But what he did not hesitate to say to a king, these compromisers of the claims of the Church fear to say in society to their equals, and even pride themselves on being liberal, in refusing to condemn a crime committed against God's anointed one. The great argument of human respect has conquered them, but it has never conquered any except moral cowards.

Therefore, I say, my dear brethren, that there is a time to speak, as well as a time to be silent; and the time exists, when silence is interpreted as an approval of what is wrong: when a

[12] Prov. viii. 15.

protest on the side of justice is called for, and the refusal of that protest is equivalent to a fraternising with injustice. If the spirit of the noble outspoken St. John prevailed more in these days, injustice would not so easily triumph, and the cause of the Church would meet with more zealous defenders. Our Holy Father himself has not hesitated to speak out, and to act with all the firmness which duty has demanded; and we indeed must be but poor craven followers, if we say nothing in his defence, when his rights are assailed, and his enemies are allowed to rob and oppress him. We are not to be scandalised because the Church suffers. St. John suffered under Herod: our Blessed Lord suffered under Pontius Pilate. *Blessed is he that shall not be scandalised in Me,* was a part of the answer once given by our Lord, when St. John's disciples, as we read in the Gospel of last Sunday, came to ask if He were the Messias. We are preparing now not to be scandalised when we shall find Him surrounded by all the humiliations which will attend Him at His Birth. The sight of the Crucifix constantly prepares us not to be scandalised at the humiliations which attended Him at His Death. Nor are we to be scandalised at humiliations which attend Him in the person of His Vicar upon earth; but we are to be confident, that as those former humiliations brought such glory to the name of Jesus, these latter ones will also bring glory to His Church, when the days of trial will pass away, and the days of peace and victory will return once more.

SERMON IV.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

WATCHING.

Prepare the way of the Lord.

THE voice of every preacher during this holy time of Advent has been but an echo of the voice of the great Preacher of the desert, the Precursor of our Blessed Lord. The note of preparation which he sounded forth has been heard, even as the words of the Apostles: it hath gone forth throughout the whole earth, and has resounded to the uttermost bounds of the world. The necessity of being ready to welcome our Saviour has been the burden of every instruction, and Grace to be ready has been the object of every prayer. And now as the Festival of His Birth grows nearer, and our desire to welcome Him grows more intense, the work of preparation is more pressing and ought to be more active. What is wanting is, that we must be ready: we must not be taken by surprise and unprepared. We are close within reach of the great event; it is even at our door. And are we prepared? Three complete weeks out of four have gone by, and all ought to have been weeks of preparation. But if they have been only imperfectly such: if we have been putting off till the last days of Advent a duty, which would be still incompletely done, even if we had been engaged upon it during the whole season,—there is greater reason for energy now; and when on this fourth and last Sunday of Advent the summons is once more given: *Prepare the way of the Lord,* there can be no plea for further delay, but there is every call for greater earnestness.

By assigning not one simple vigil, as she does with some of her festivals, but by fixing four weeks of vigils, the Church has spoken her mind upon the necessity of a patient and well-studied preparation. The duties which especially belong to vigils have been prescribed and commanded, namely: Watching, Prayer, and Fasting. Has each week contributed its share of work, and have we made progress corresponding to the time which has elapsed?

Have you even understood properly the meaning of each of these three duties? Of two of them you cannot help having a clear idea, for they are too tangible to be misunderstood; and their time and obligation are marked out for us in many ways, with a clearness and positiveness which cannot be mistaken. But perhaps, of the other duty, of Watching, you may not have a sufficiently distinct knowledge; and yet as it is imposed upon us as an act which must enter into our work of preparation, it cannot be without advantage for us to turn our attention to it, and to see what it means, and how it is to be carried out into practice. Perhaps we have not oftentimes thought of this duty of watching; but we will try to understand something at least, and something practical, about it to-day.

I. It is impossible for us, upon reflection, not to be struck by the importance which the sacred Scriptures attach to the duty of watching. Our Blessed Lord makes this duty the moral of several of His parables. At one time He speaks about servants under orders to wait up for their master until he return home at some uncertain hour of the night. It may be early, or it may be late; but at whatever hour it is to be, they are to be ready, *that when he knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.*[1] At another time it is the question of being upon guard against a thief, and the same blessing is pronounced upon the servant who is then watching: *Blessed is that servant whom, when his lord shall come, he will find so doing. Amen, I say to you, he will place him over all his goods.*[2] Then there is the parable of the Ten Virgins, divided into the two classes of wise and foolish. They are alike in every respect, except that the wise ones showed their prudence in being on their guard against being surprised by the arrival of the bridegroom; whilst the foolish ones, through their want of foresight, were unprepared at the moment that he did arrive. In consequence they were not admitted to the marriage feast. Upon applying for admission after the delay caused by their unguardedness, they received that hard and unwelcome answer: *Amen, I know you not;* and then immediately follows the moral: *Watch ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour.*[3] And the duty is oftentimes associated with prayer; as when our dear Lord says to His disciples: *Take ye heed therefore, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.*[4] And to those Apostles whom He took with Him into the garden, when He went to pray at the opening

[1] Luke xii. 37.
[2] Matt. xxiv. 46.
[3] Ibid. xxv. 13.
[4] Ibid. xiii. 33.

of His Passion, He saith: *Stay you here, and watch with Me;* and when on coming to them He finds them asleep, He expostulates with Peter, and says to him: *Could you not watch one hour with Me? Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*[5] To which the Church in her beautiful Holy Week Office appends a further expostulation: 'Do you not see how Judas sleepeth not, but hasteneth to deliver Me up to the Jews?'[6]

And the Apostles, who were so well instructed in the spirit of our Lord, set great store by this duty of *watching*. St. Peter, remembering the words addressed to himself, delivers the same admonition to others, when he associates prayer and watching, in these words: *Be prudent, and watch in prayers.*[7] And elsewhere, in the passage so familiar to us, being brought before us in the service of Complin, when the Church exhorts us to watchfulness even when we are going to take our rest, he says: *Be sober and watch, because your adversary, the devil, goeth about, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*[8] And St. Paul speaks about the works of day and the works of night, and he says: *Let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober.*[9] And when he instructs his disciple Timothy in his duties as a Bishop, he says to him: *Be thou vigilant, labour in all things.*[10] It was the want of this vigilance which is imputed as a fault to the Bishop of Sardis in the Apocalypse: *I know thy works, that thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead. Be watchful . . . If thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee.*[11] And later on in the same book is made the announcement: *Behold, I come as a thief: blessed is he that watcheth.*[12]

And in the Old Testament we find watching alluded to as an exercise of a loving soul in its desire for union with God. The Psalmist practised it, as he says: *O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at the break of day.*[13] And in one of his penitential songs he declares: *I have watched, and have become as a sparrow all alone on the house-top.*[14] And Wisdom says of its votaries: *I love them that love me; and they that watch for me in the early morning shall find me.* And a little later on it is said: *Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates.*[15] And the spouse in the Canticles looking for her beloved exclaims: *I will rise and will go about the city, and will seek him whom*

[5] Matt. xxvi. 38, 41.
[6] Matins for Maundy Thursday, Resp. in 3d Noct.
[7] Pet. iv. 7.
[8] Ibid. v. 8.
[9] 1 Thess. v. 6.
[10] 2 Tim. iv. 5.
[11] Rev. iii. 1, 3.
[12] Ibid. xvi. 15.
[13] Ps. lxii.
[14] Ibid. ci.
[15] Prov. viii. 17, 34.

my soul loveth. The watchmen who kept the city found me. Have you seen him whom my soul loveth? When I had a little passed them, I found him.[16] So, it is amongst the watchers he is to be found. Ordinary natural rest is declared by her not to interfere with her sweet exercise; for she says elsewhere: *I sleep, but my heart watcheth.*[17]

And especially as an Advent duty is it urged upon us. At the commencement of the holy season the warning of the zealous Apostle is held before us: *Know that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep . . . The night is past, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light.*[18] And we are looking forward, now especially so near the completion of this season of preparation, to share in the blessing that was vouchsafed to the first visitors to the newly-born Saviour, Whom we are almost on the eve of welcoming. But who were they? *And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flocks.*[19] Therefore we cannot help seeing that there is an importance and a prominence given to the duty of watching by the Holy Spirit, in all that He has ordered to be written for our instruction.

II. The Church too, who always in her practice and her lessons shows herself to be in such perfect conformity with the teaching and the spirit of the sacred Scriptures, is very assiduous in impressing upon us the necessity of watching. What is most to our present purpose is, to consider her conduct with reference to her preparation for the Festivals and the greater solemnities, amongst the foremost of which ranks the glorious solemnity of Christmas. The eve of a Festival is called its Vigil: the day of watching in preparation for the Festival. But for Christmas it is not one day, it is a month, a period, at least, including four Sundays, that she sets apart for the work of preparation and watching, in order that we may be fitted for the due observance of such a holy and solemn commemoration of an event, for which the world had been watching in sorrowful anxiety for four thousand years. Prepare, be ready, watch, be earnest and active: these are the words of advice she is now constantly giving to us. On the first Sunday she began it in the spirited language of St. Paul; again and again she has repeated the advice in the fervent words of the Baptist. *Excita;* arouse, awaken, stir us up, is the prayer she frequently addresses to her God, from whom she hopes to gain the Grace to do what she so eagerly requires of us. And as the time of the great event draws nearer, her watchfulness be-

[16] Cant. iii. 2.
[17] Ibid. v. 2.
[18] Rom. xiii. 11, 12.
[19] Luke ii. 8.

comes more intense and her impatience more restless, and in loving aspirations she calls out in her rich and splendid Antiphons: O Wisdom, O Adonai, O King of Nations, come! Delay not! We are eager to welcome Thee. Thou wilt not find us unprepared: our lamps are burning and our loins are girt. Thou wilt find us watching.

One office the Church never forgets is committed to her, and that is the office of the Watchman, of which Almighty God speaks in such impressive and even awful terms in the 33d chapter of the Prophet Ezechiel: *O son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word from My mouth, and shalt tell it them from Me.*[20] The threats which that watchman was commissioned to pronounce against the wicked and the impenitent, and the promises of pardon and reward which he was told to extend to the just and to those who repented, these are entrusted to the Church; and it is particularly in acceptable times, such as the present, and in days of preparation for the great solemnities, that the voice of warning and of encouragement is heard constantly resounding. The fearful thought of the Day of final Judgment was for this reason proposed to us at the commencement of Advent, that we might thus be roused up to watch, and even now prepare for the part we shall each of us have to act upon that day. Those that are in a state of fear and alarm do not easily fall asleep; and the Church thus alarms us in order to keep us awake. And at the end of Advent it is the argument of encouragement, confidence, and love that is used, to draw us on upon our way. Bethlehem is close to us. We know what we are to find when we arrive there. Even He will be there to welcome and to bless us, who, by stretching out His hands to us, will be saying by His acts then, what later in life He used to be fond of saying in those words of love: *Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*[21]

The Church certainly has proved to us during all this season that she understands the duty of watching, and that she faithfully practises it. And from what she does, and what she says, we may be able to arrive at a clear and practical understanding of the task, which is always, but now with exceptional earnestness, imposed upon us. Let us apply ourselves a little more closely, and see what this duty really does mean.

III. You all know that one of the deadly sins is sloth. Like the other deadly sins, it is not so much a sin merely, as a vice and a sinful habit. It is numbered amongst the seven capital sins, as

[20] Ezech. xxxiii. 7. [21] Matt. xi. 28.

forming one of the sources from which several faults take their rise. It means a languor and inactivity of mind and soul, a feebleness of will, a repugnance to spiritual duties, and a consequent omission of them. This is spiritual sloth, and it is this which is most directly opposed to watching. Just as with regard to temporal and bodily exertions there is a spirit of activity and earnestness shown by some, and a laziness and obstinate refusal of any effort manifested by others, so is it with regard to spiritual duties. It is St. Paul's illustration over again. They who contend for the mastery in earthly contests, do not refuse to make the necessary efforts and to undergo the necessary course of training: they for a corruptible, we for an incorruptible crown. Watching implies all that is opposed to sloth. It implies diligence, earnestness, activity, perseverance, a willingness to labour, and a determination to succeed.

For there is a sleep of the soul which is a dangerous and a sinful state; in which a person through indolence, negligence, sensuality, and a want of appreciation of the truths and realities of eternity, prefers to do nothing; but, going on in a state of self-indulgence, allows matters to take their course, makes no resistance to spiritual enemies, feels a loathing of spiritual duties, and shrinks from every effort which demands the least self-sacrifice. If heaven cannot be gained without violence, and if *it is the violent who bear it away*;[22] if *no one is crowned, unless he strive lawfully*;[23] what probability is there that such souls are to be among the chosen? Sloth is certainly the mother of many evils. Unwillingness to repent, impatience of all religious instruction and exhortation to duty, abandonment of prayer, neglect of the Sacraments, no care about flying the occasions of sin, peace of mind and satisfaction in a state of sin, and very probably despair and final impenitence: such are the consequences of this deadly vice; and no wonder the Church anxiously labours to caution us against it, as against a fatal and ruinous danger. And this is one object she has in view, when she enforces the Scripture exhortation to watch.

From this negative meaning we may pass on to the consideration of a further more special and more positive meaning of watching. When St. Paul enumerates deeds of darkness and of light, he cautions us against and condemns the former, and insists upon our walking *honestly, as in the day*.[24] Our watching, therefore, implies an active busy correspondence with grace, performing and persevering in those duties of prayer, obedience, frequentation of the Sacraments, deeds of charity, and that self-discipline which enter into the life of every one who really is endeavouring to live

[22] Matt. xi. 12. [23] 2 Tim. ii. 5. [24] Rom. xiii. 13.

in accordance with the holy and exalted character of a Christian. It implies that we are fully impressed and influenced by principles, which flow at once from the knowledge of the great truths of eternity. The soul that watches knows and remembers its end, that God has made it for Himself, that He will one day judge it, and that its position in eternity depends upon the result of that judgment: that the commandments of God must be obeyed, because by them we are to prove our fidelity: that prayer must be practised, as an essential condition for gaining Grace to keep these commandments: that the Sacraments must be frequented, as being ordinary channels of grace: that faith, hope, and charity are not speculative, but most practical and necessary virtues, involving very important duties: that active charity to others is a prominent feature in the Christian law, and will enter greatly into the evidence to be brought for or against us after our death: that it must be upon its guard against enemies who are ever seeking its ruin; and must not only begin and go on with a life of fidelity, but must persevere in such a course even to the end. One who knows this, and acts up to this, is doing his duty of watching. He is keen, and alive, and awake to his own spiritual interests; and at whatever hour death may come upon him, he will not be seized upon in an unguarded hour, but will be ready when the sound is heard: Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go forth to meet Him.

This is the general duty of watching; and you cannot deny or doubt that it is a duty incumbent upon everybody, and binding at all times. But when prescribed as one of the duties of Advent, as a duty which must enter into our preparation for a festival, it means something additional, both as to what is negative and positive. It means that at such a time we must be more than ever cautious in avoiding sin, of which sloth is so frequently the source; and more than ever keen and active in complying with all spiritual obligations, in praying, in preparing for the Sacraments, and in entering into the spirit of self-denial, which will prove that we are in earnest. A festival is a time of additional and exceptional Grace, and it demands, therefore, unusual preparation. Prepare the way of the Lord, is, then, the constant admonition of the Church in these holy days of Advent; and if you neglect the duty of watching, you are not preparing: the great solemnity will find you not yet ready to receive the graces intended for you; and you will be like the thoughtless and self-indulgent inhabitants of Bethlehem, who cared nothing and knew nothing about the birth of that Divine Child, Whom the shepherds that were watching went to adore, when they heard the beautiful songs of Angels chanting His praises in the silent midnight.

Do not forget how God, in reward for your complying with the duty of watching for Him, is in His turn ever watching for you, watching over you, and protecting you by His care. *Ecce, non dormitabit neque dormiet qui custodit Israel*:[25] *Behold, He shall neither slumber nor sleep who guardeth Israel.* There is ever a Providence over us: it is God's watching. There is help within reach at every danger: strength to be gained under every trial and temptation, because God watches and sees your wants. Nothing escapes His watchful eye, nothing is out of the reach of His tender care. As when sleeping in the boat in the midst of the storm, He immediately awoke when He heard the cry: Lord, save us, we are perishing! so are God's ears ever sensitive: not a cry of distress arises, but He hears and relieves it. In the Blessed Sacrament He is ever watching in the midst of us. We give the name of watching to our hour's adoration of Him, when He allows Himself to be exposed in order to receive an unusual tribute of our homage and love: His is a constant watching, because His love never fails. Angel-guardians are watching over us, being appointed to do so by their God and our God. Saints, in their communion with us, see us and watch us in that light[26] in which they see whatever God wishes them to see. And therefore we are well and tenderly watched over, as we move forward amid all the dangers which surround us. We too must watch over ourselves, and thus work hand in hand with Him who has made us for Himself, and is always drawing us on towards our happy destiny. Put yourself in a state of Grace, and you will be watching. Continue in that state, and you will keep watching. Persevere to the end in that state, and yours will be the blessing promised to the faithful and prudent servant, whom, when his Lord cometh, He will find watching.

[25] Ps. cxx. [26] In lumine tuo videbimus lumen. Ps. xxxv.

SERMON V.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

There was no room for them. Luke ii. 7.

However great will be the joy of the Church upon the glorious solemnity which is now so soon to dawn upon us, and however eager she is to invite us to a participation in her joy, yet she will not have us anticipate it too soon, or break in upon our work of preparation, forgetting the duties of to-day in our desire for the blessings of to-morrow. For the time of Advent, which is the time of preparation, though so near its end, is not yet quite completed; and, indeed, because it is so nearly over, this is a special reason for greater earnestness in using well the few hours which still remain to us. In order to excite you to this additional fervour in your preparation, I have brought before you those words of the Evangelist of the Birth and the sacred Infancy of our dear Lord, in which he tells us of the poor welcome, or rather the absolute rejection, of the long-expected Redeemer, when He was on the point of being born among us. The whole world, if it only knew, as it ought to have known, the great blessing in store for it, ought to have been most busy and full of glad feelings of anticipation at His arrival. But what was the case? St. Luke tells us how His Mother and her protector were treated: *There was no room for them.* And St. John, speaking of His advent into the world, says: *He came to His own, and His own received Him not.*[1] We will now, for our instruction, and in order to excite ourselves to a more faithful fulfilment of our duty, consider what was the conduct of the world in its reception of our Blessed Lord at His Birth. And then we shall do well to pass on and see, whether we ourselves do not deserve a share in the reproach which we cannot help attaching to the conduct of those, who were so wanting in love and loyalty on that first Christmas Eve.

I. As there are now only a few hours to elapse before the great Festival will commence, so were there but a few hours intervening before the wonderful event of the Birth of the long-ex-

[1] John i. 11.

pected Redeemer, when that act took place which our text records. Mary and Joseph have just arrived at Bethlehem. Obedience has brought them thither. She is full of anxiety, as her time is now so close at hand. She has feelings of great joy, for she knows Whom she bears; and yet it is a joy in which there is some admixture of sorrow; for our dear Lord may have thought of His own good Mother on that occasion, on which He once said: *A woman, when she is in labour, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.*[2] Her hour was come, and she was close upon a moment to which she had for nine months been looking forward with loving expectation; but there was still something wanting to complete her happiness. She knew that all that the world could give in the way of shelter and comfort, was far below what was worthy of Him, who was so soon to be manifested in the flesh. And the venerable Joseph, to whom the mystery that was about to be accomplished had been revealed by an Angel, at a time when he was plunged into the bitterest perplexity at what was going to take place: he, who had been chosen to be the protector and to act as a father to the Word Incarnate, shares her joy and her anxiety. From door to door they go; and explaining the pressing want in which they are, they ask for whatever lodging their poor means could afford; but everywhere the same answer awaits them: *There was no room for them.* Bethlehem of course was crowded. The same cause which brought them thither, had brought very many others, who had come in compliance with the emperor's order to be enrolled. Those who had the best means for paying found the best accommodation; but for the poor there was no room.

This conduct of the people of Bethlehem was quite in keeping with the whole state of the world at the time. It was a time of peace, it is true; but it was also a time in which little virtue was to be found, and in which what our dear Lord has said of His future coming was even then true,—a time in which faith and charity had waxed cold upon earth. One might, indeed, have thought that after four thousand years of punishment, the earth would have been but too eager and impatient to welcome the One, Who was to come and bring a better peace than that which this world can give,—peace and reconciliation with God. Many and many a time during those long and dreary centuries, in which God's displeasure was visited upon the earth, had devout and ardent souls called upon Him to shorten His anger, and to send Him whom He was to send. The Advent Antiphons, which we

[2] John xvi. 21.

have been chanting during these last four weeks, had their origin during that period of gloom. *Ye heavens, drop down your dew from above, and let the clouds rain down the Just One: let the earth open and bud forth its Saviour*,[3] had been the song of Isaias several hundred years before; and many times had it formed the burden of the songs of the devout children of Israel. The joy which filled Abraham, when he saw in spirit the day which he had longed to see in reality, cheered many an anxious soul, sorrowing under present privation, but gladdened at the thought, that that time was hurrying on towards its completion. And now that the completion had arrived, and when we might have expected that palace would have vied with palace, and city have contended with city, for the honour of being chosen as the abode of the King of Nations, there is coldness, indifference, rejection everywhere; not a word of welcome, but at each place the same hard and cruel answer: *No room.*

It is true that there was nothing in the outward appearance of that poor forlorn couple, which could betoken their dignity; nothing which could awaken naturally in the mind of any of those inhospitable Bethlehemites, that she was the Virgin who was to conceive and to bring forth the Emmanuel. But if they had not lost faith, they might have been influenced by some evidences higher than those which were natural. They ought to have remembered the prophecies which indicated the time, and the place, of the Birth of the Messias. Daniel had foretold the time; and Micheas, according to the testimony of the scribes given soon after His Birth on the inquiry of Herod, had specified Bethlehem as the place. But as during the lifetime of our dear Lord, when He performed in Jerusalem miracles great and numerous enough to have converted Tyre and Sidon, even then He was rejected, no wonder that the faithless Jews did not recognise the Virgin-Mother, and could not find room for her. In His Birth, therefore, His Passion in some way commences and is foreshown. During His life He often had nowhere to lay His head: at His death He was sent outside of Jerusalem bearing His reproach, there to consummate His Sacrifice; and so also at His Birth He can find no place of shelter: He is obliged to make His entrance into the world outside of any residence; and a poor ruined stable witnesses the glorious event, which was to bring such glory to God and His Angels, and peace and joy to the earth. Such was the bearing of the world in receiving its Redeemer.

II. Now, my dear brethren, let me ask you, what would have been your conduct, if any of you had lived in those days, had

[3] Is. xlv. 8.

happened to be residents in Bethlehem, and had seen the tender and gentle Virgin, with her meek and patient husband, come to your door, and ask for shelter. Would you have turned them away, and said that *there was no room for them?* Or would you not rather have done what Zacheus did, when he was told by our Lord that He was going to be his guest? Would you not give the suppliants a warm and respectful welcome, and feel yourself honoured, beyond all estimation, at being chosen to minister to their wants and comfort? But what is the value of such a feeling and resolution when they only regard what is imaginary, and when they exist not in practice in regard to what is real? However hard it may seem to be to say it, it is true that those who now refuse to do what the Church demands at this holy and privileged time, are just the ones who would refuse a welcome to those two suppliants, and would be hard and cruel enough to tell them that *there was no room for them.*

Such are those who, through indolence, sensuality, worldliness, and want of appreciation for the sacred mysteries, refuse to approach the Sacraments at this time, and allow themselves to remain in a state of grievous sin, or in a state of sloth against which the Church so fervently cautions them. I am not exaggerating, and I do not wish to be misunderstood. I do not say you are under the same obligation to approach the Sacraments at Christmas as at Easter; but I do say you are bound, if you know you are in a state of grievous sin, or are under the influence of spiritual sloth, to exert yourself now especially; and that if you do not, it is a proof you value not the Festival, nor the great fact of which it is a commemoration and a perpetual remembrance; and it is not judging such unpractical Christians too severely to say, that if the Church cannot move them to a sense of piety, Mary and Joseph would to such recreant spirits have applied for shelter in vain.

What are the reasons which keep such undevout Christians from complying with what is certainly an anxious wish of the Church on the great solemnity of to-morrow? For Bethlehem means the 'house of bread,' and you know that the Blessed Sacrament is the Bread of Life, from which these disloyal souls keep themselves aloof. They plead that it is a busy and distracting time: there are so many friends and parties of pleasure to provide for. And the fact of preparing for the Sacraments implies a seriousness and spirit of retirement, which they consider to clash with the cheerfulness and conviviality of the Christmas season. Alas! alas! Yet they pretend to say that if Mary and Joseph knocked at their door and asked for admittance, they would

not reject them, though they do reject and refuse to receive Him, for whom alone those two were anxious; for they cared nothing about themselves, but everything about Him. With such persons there is room for pleasure, for business, for indulgence,—but not for those who plead for the poor outcast Child of Bethlehem. And yet these do know, what those other recusants did not know, for Whom it is that their hospitality is besought, and Whom they are deliberately and knowingly turning away from their door.

Then there are others, who at this time, when the claims of the poor are paramount, for Christmas is especially the season of the poor, turn an ungenerous or an unwilling ear to the appeal made to them in their behalf. *Whatever you do to one of these little ones*, says our Lord, speaking of the poor, *you do to Me*. It is the time of the year, in which the sufferings of the poor are most acute, and their calls for charity most pressing. Amongst them did our dear Lord by preference cast His lot, and thus exalt them to a level with His own state in this world. Can you think that those who refuse to listen to these claims, really would have given a welcome to the two poor suppliants, who, with every appearance of poverty about them, were on that very account turned away from so many doors, with the same stern inhospitable answer: *No room for them?* Here is a test, and a very practical one. What our Lord tells us of the Day of Judgment, ought at least to influence those who are hard and uncharitable to the poor. To those who have been considerate towards the poor, upon that Day a welcome will be given by the Judge, who Himself had been poor: to others, the sensual, uncharitable despisers of the poor, the answer will be given: *I know you not*. Go elsewhere. Here there is no room.

Do not think, my dear brethren, that this is an inopportunely severe aspect of to-morrow's most beautiful and cheering Festival. Remember what I said at the beginning: it is still a time of preparation and of penance, and a time, because it is so short, for more intense earnestness and fervour. We are not to flatter ourselves that we are prepared, just because we can move ourselves to some sentiments of sympathy and admiration for the holy Virgin-Mother in her hours of anxiety, or to feelings of indignant reproach against the unkind and hard-hearted inhabitants of Bethlehem. Pious thoughts avail nothing, when the pious acts to which they ought to lead are not complied with. What St. James so well says of practical charity to our neighbour is applicable now. *If a brother or sister be naked and want daily food, and one of you say to them: Go in peace, be warmed and filled; yet give them not*

those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit?[4] And if you know that there is an effort which you can make, an act of obedience to the call of the Church which is within your power, by which you will be doing more to comfort the heart of that Mother, and to give shelter to her Child, than by all your feelings of sympathy and protests of indignation, and yet refuse that effort and act, *what shall it profit?*

III. There is yet one more thought which suggests itself, and which justifies the conduct of the Church in her love for the Mother of the world's Redeemer, and illustrates her principle of associating Mother and Son in the great Mystery of the Incarnation. Whom did those reject, who gave the inhospitable answer, that *there was no room for them?* Was it only the Mother, or was it not the Son also: and the Mother, because of the Son whom she bore within her, that asked for shelter, and was refused it? It was not the Son, perhaps, immediately, directly, and visibly, that was sent away from door after door; but it was He that was effectually and personally excluded, when the Mother was not admitted. Suppose at the Day of Judgment, our Blessed Lord pronounces a condemnation upon those who acted thus, and says to them: When I was about to be born you rejected Me, and told Me there was no room for Me! will it avail them to plead as an excuse: No, good Lord, it was not Thyself, it was only Thy Mother we rejected? Will it not be answered: In refusing her you refused Me, and because there was no room for her, I was driven away also, and had to be born in a stable? Who, then, do you think, my dear brethren, enter most into the reality of the great fact accomplished at Bethlehem: we who acknowledge the Mother in this Festival, and everywhere in the Mystery of the Incarnation; or they, who bring themselves to think and to teach, that to honour the Mother is to diminish the honour that is due to the Son?

Let us now prepare, all of us, to go in pious pilgrimage to Bethlehem, and see the word that is to be accomplished. We shall find the city full, very full; but there will be room for us. Those that are going thither now are sympathising friends, practical comforters to the poor outcast Child and His happy yet anxious Mother. It is not into the richly-furnished houses we shall seek for admission: *let us go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.*[5] Other houses in Bethlehem have fallen long since into ruin, and their glory has perished. That ruinous stable has been turned into a palace for Almighty God, and its glory never shall be forgotten. Churches and monasteries have

[4] James ii. 15, 16. [5] Heb. xiii. 13.

been clustered about it, and the manger in which lay the Child, an outcast amongst His own people, is treasured up in Rome as one of the most sacred treasures of the Church, in one of her most ancient and venerable basilicas. Happy you, if you strive to share the privilege of that honoured stable, by becoming in Holy Communion the abode of your Infant Saviour. Angels will sing over you, as over that poor home. And He who brought blessings unto men of good will, will number you among those who are to receive that peace of which He was the bearer to earth.

Prepare at once, then, to enter into the spirit of the great solemnity which is about to dawn. Turn not away such thoughts as if there were no room for them; but act upon them, and the Festival will be a reality to you. Whatever effort it may cost you, refuse it not. You will be abundantly repaid by Him, whose Birth is the cause of joy to the whole world: a joy offered to all, but in truth accepted and realised by those only, who refuse not the offer made to them, but find room for the Mother and her Child.

SERMON VI.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

I announce to you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Saviour. Luke ii. 10, 11.

THIS happy announcement, which was once made so gladly by an Angel in the silence of midnight, when that great event occurred which we are solemnising upon this day, is made with equal gladness by the Church in the fulness of midday, not on the mountains, but in the midst of every city, upon the glorious Festival in which we celebrate this Mystery of joy. For to the Church the Birth of our dear Lord is not an old event, long past and gone by, and to be numbered amongst the days of old. What St. Paul said, she ever says: *Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever.*[1] His is not an existence destined for a limited time. He is for all times, the earliest and the latest. He was born not only for those who were living upon earth when the Angels sang their song over His crib in the ruined stable, but for those also who had gone before, and for us who have come after. As Abraham, two thousand years before, saw the day of Christ and was glad, and thus manifested in his own instance the joy which was common to the Patriarchs and Prophets, as they looked forward to an event which was for them, so do we look back to the same cause of joy in an event which is for us also. The proclamation, then, of the Angel is still of avail, and the Church takes it up and makes it her own. It is she who says to-day what for eighteen centuries she has never ceased to say on this great solemnity: *I announce to you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Saviour.*

Let me invite you, then, to-day to this welcome duty of attending to a summons of joy. This is never a hard nor an unwelcome duty. We shall see what is the greatness and the extent of this joy, in the fact and in its commemoration.

I. The Birth of Christ, in its fact, was a cause of universal

[1] Heb. xiii. 8.

joy : it was a cause of joy not only to all the people, but far higher than this world did the joy reach. To the Eternal Father it was an event of joy. For He that is born is His own Son, dwelling in His bosom, and proceeding from Him for all eternity. The voice which was heard by men, at His Baptism and His Transfiguration, must have been spoken at His Birth : His Mother and the Angels may well have heard it : *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*[2] For in His Wisdom and Goodness He had designed, and had written down as the first of His decrees, that His own Son should become Man, and be born of a woman. And what His Wisdom and Goodness had decreed, His power now executes ; and therefore He rejoices because His will has been accomplished.

And to the Son Himself what an occasion of joy is this ! He rejoices as a giant running his course,[3] and He commences, with a heart full of joy, the work which always delighted Him, of doing His Father's will. He loves to come ; and though so little welcomed by the world, He welcomes Himself upon His arrival into it, and at once begins dispensing the blessings and graces of which He is the source. Even in His poverty He rejoices. He accepts it willingly : it is His own choice and preference. He is obeying His Father : therefore He rejoices. He is honouring His Immaculate Mother : therefore He looks up to her and rejoices. He is purchasing the salvation and the happiness of souls : therefore He rejoices. If the Apostles could rejoice when they went away from the tribunals of their judges, rejoicing because they were considered worthy to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus, so does He, for whom this Name is in store, now rejoice in all the sufferings which surround Him on His entrance into a world which He was determined to redeem by suffering.

And the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed Three, one of whose gifts to us is the blessing of joy, He rejoices because He sees in this event the result of His own coöperation with the Virgin-Mother. So said the Angel Gabriel, when she, anxious about her virginity, which she would not have sacrificed even for the honour of such a Maternity, asked : How can this be done ? *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.*[4] As at His Baptism, when the Eternal Father expressed His good pleasure, the Spirit of God descended as a dove[5] and came upon Him that was baptised, so must we imagine Him to be hovering over the crib, and watching with joy over Child and Mother. Thus does the Birth of Him,

[2] Matt. iii. 17, and xvii. 5.
[3] Ps. xviii.
[4] Luke i. 35.
[5] Matt. iii. 16.

whose praises the Angels sang, give joy as well as *Glory to God in the highest.*

But it is to the whole of mankind, to *all the people*, to all creatures, that the good Angel declares to the watchful shepherds that this great day is a cause of joy. First and foremost amongst them she stands, the happy privileged Mother, the most intimately connected with Him, who through her came into this world. No joy of creatures can equal hers. It stands alone. It is a mother's joy. He was born for all, but especially for her, upon whom now has come down all the glory and joy of Maternity. Her hours of anxiety have passed away, and she rejoices *because a Man is born into the world.*[6] These, you remember, were His own words when He spoke about a mother's joy. As Adam rejoiced after the creation of Eve, who had been formed from his own substance, and, looking upon her, said : *This now is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh,*[7] so does Mary look upon her own Son, and, in the fulness of her joy, address these words to Him. She had been appointed to reverse the work of Eve, and through her the Woman now says to the Man, what then the first man said to the woman. And her good and faithful husband Joseph joins in her joy, and both of them, though regretting for His sake the poverty in which they are, are filled with joy as they gaze in a wondering spirit of adoration upon Him, *on whom the Angels long to look.*[8]

Angels ! yes, my dear brethren, Angels are there, and they are satisfied, and share in the joy of to-day. They had said that they were announcing tidings of great joy to all the people, but they do not and cannot exclude themselves. They love men too much not to share in a happiness which concerns them, to whom they are appointed as *ministering spirits.*[9] The mystery concerns them also, though not so directly as it concerns man ; for He became not an Angel but *a little lesser than the Angels :*[10] He became man. It was belief in this Mystery of the Incarnation and Birth of the Son of God, and submission to it, which confirmed the good Angels, in their principality ; and so even for their own sake they rejoice. And therefore you see and hear them in their glad chorus, singing the praises of their Lord and our Lord. They are the first apostles and evangelists of this joyful event : for the *Gloria in excelsis*, which was first sung upon Christmas night by them, is fittingly called the Angelical Hymn. It is now no longer prophets, but it is these blessed spirits, who announce, not an event that is to be, when *a Virgin shall con-*

[6] John xvi. 21. [7] Gen. ii. 23. [8] 1 Pet. i. 12.
[9] Heb. i. 14. [10] Ps. viii.

ceive, and bring forth a Son,[11] but an event that is accomplished, because *this day is born a Saviour*. If *there is joy in heaven before the Angels of God over one sinner that doth penance*,[12] what great joy must there not be when it is not one penitent, but the whole body of penitents that are now reconciled to God! Faithfully indeed do these blessed spirits obey the order which St. Paul, in the splendid opening of his Epistle to the Hebrews, read in the third Mass to-day, states to have been given to them: *When He bringeth in the First-begotten into the world He saith: And let all the Angels of God adore Him*.[13] Adoration constitutes one of the acts which form the joyful occupation of the Angels, and it is this act they perform on the solemnity of this day.

But especially to mankind, to all the people, is this proclaimed as a day of joy. It is to *us* that a Saviour is born; and as the Creed tells us, *it was for us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven, was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man*. What universal joy, and on how many accounts, does this great fact bring into the world! Sin, with its ungentle and mournful pressure, is removed, and grace begins its reign upon earth. *The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men*.[14] We have been reconciled to God, and peace is now made with Heaven; because the Prince of Peace has become one of us; and how can Heaven look down upon earth except in love, when earth is now blessed with such a gift? We are exalted in dignity; for in the same proportion as He has humbled Himself by becoming man, He has raised up man to a level with Himself. Therefore St. Peter does not hesitate to use an expression from which we should be inclined to shrink, and could scarcely have dared to use ourselves, unless the Spirit of Truth had first adopted it, and prepared it for us, that through Christ Jesus our Lord we are *made partakers of the divine nature*.[15] Is not the fact of this day one of joy to all the people? Saints rejoice, because this day hath purchased for them grace and perseverance. Sinners rejoice, because it hath gained for them repentance and pardon. And so we gladly accept and welcome the message of the Angel, who through the shepherds speaks to us, and bids us not to fear but to rejoice.

II. The fact which we solemnise this day, then, was intimately associated with joy; and is not the commemoration necessarily one of joy in like manner? The anniversary of any great event in the history of a country is never forgotten, but the event itself is made to live again, as year after year it is celebrated by a

[11] Is. vii. 14. [12] Luke xv. 10. [13] Heb. i. 6.
[14] Tit. ii. 11. [15] 2 Pet. i. 4.

proud and grateful people. When in the Old Testament the command was given to the Israelites to commemorate each year for ever with great joy the event of their liberation from the bondage of Egypt, the principle was affirmed which nations illustrate, when they celebrate each year the victories by which they have conquered oppressors or achieved their independence. What a conquest does not this day commemorate! and why should not the commemoration be associated with glory and joy? The Mystery of the Incarnation has not been exhausted of its blessings: they are as abundant and as effectual now, as upon the day itself that the Angel proclaimed joy to all the people.

The Church therefore rejoices to-day, and commands us to join with hér in her spirit of gladness. Advent, the season of penance and of watching, has passed, and we are now reaping the fruit for which we had then been labouring in sorrow. We were then living over again the four thousand years of gloom, when deferred hope was sickening our souls, and we were longing in painful suspense for a blessing, which was still kept out of our reach. Now it is no longer deferred: it is in our possession, and therefore we have a right to rejoice. And what a high motive does the Church assign for her joy! You remember how in the joyful thanksgiving hymn—the Te Deum—first is recorded the joy of the Cherubim and Seraphim, the blessed spirits, the glorious choir of Apostles, the Prophets, the Martyrs, and other Saints before the throne of God, in their contemplation of the Blessed Trinity; and then associated with these the holy Church throughout the whole earth joins in its confession of praise. So does she join to-day in her confession of joy.

If, as we have seen, the Birth of the Son of God gave joy to the Eternal Father, and to the Son Himself, and the Holy Spirit, therefore the Church, because it is the Church of God, and is inhabited by the Holy Ghost, must rejoice and be in harmony with her Founder. She represents Almighty God upon earth, and His cause is entrusted to her. What advances that cause occasions joy to her; and therefore, on account of her God, she is filled with joy. Then her doctrine of the Communion of Saints, which with her is so practical a reality, makes her a partaker of the joy of the Virgin-Mother, of the happy St. Joseph, and of the choir of Angels. She, at least, is never forgetful of the honour due to the ever-blessed Mother of the Incarnate Word: zealously and solidly she defends that honour, and she cannot enter into the stable of Bethlehem, without seeing what shepherds and kings saw when they entered it, *Jesus with Mary His Mother.* She has not yet entered into her future triumphant state; but she already

finds herself in company with *many thousands of Angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect*, who are all to be found in *the Church of the First-born*.[16] Certainly a Festival like this brings all these associations before her ; and therefore it is that there is so high a tone given to the Church's joy to-day.

And for her own visible members here below she has good reasons to rejoice. She knows how all her children must be influenced by the argument of this Festival ; and because it is an occasion of blessing to them, therefore it is a cause of joy to her. It was especially for men that the Mystery was effected, and it is especially for men that the annual commemoration is solemnised. We feel to-day that heaven is brought closer to us. Angels, who inhabit that blessed kingdom, are mingling their songs with ours : they are leading our chorus to-day, and it is not hard for us to rejoice, when we become one in spirit with them. So many graces and blessings are being showered down upon us, that we cannot help rejoicing. And especially if in Holy Communion we have ourselves become a Bethlehem, a house of bread, and He that is the living Bread that has come down from heaven, has taken up His abode within us, Angels will be singing around us also, and be helping us to more fervent and loving acts of thanksgiving and praise. It is, then, a day of universal joy, and the message of the Angel has not been received in vain.

And yet, my dear brethren, is there to be an exception? What about the poor? Are they to rejoice? There is, indeed, about this Festival much to comfort them and make them rejoice, when they see how their own state was privileged in Bethlehem : that He that was born, was born poor, of poor parents, and that His first earthly adorers were of the class of the poor, the hard-working watchful mountain shepherds. There is, then, much to make them rejoice, when they contemplate the details and study the lessons of this solemnity. But that is not the only question which affects their state upon this day. What are you, who are not of the poor, what are you to do, in order to contribute to their joy on this Festival of universal joy? If you make these days to be days of earthly rejoicing, of social meetings, of conviviality, and do nothing to contribute to the wants of the poor, to whom this is oftentimes a season of unusual suffering and privation, and who feel their wants all the more, when they see others in a state of unusual rejoicing, are you not adding to their suffering, instead of trying to make it to them also a season of joy? Do deeds of charity to them, send them words of comfort, lay aside something which you will consecrate to the use of the poor. Allow your

[16] Heb. xii. 22, 23.

clergy to go amongst them with your gifts, or, better still, bear them yourselves, and say to them: I announce to you tidings of joy; for it is your own special Festival, and amongst you has the Saviour been born. View in the persons of the poor, the Sacred Humanity of Him who has to-day assumed our nature. Let not your sympathy with them be that of sentiment merely, but let it be real and carried out into act. Do not tell them in their cold and hungry and naked state, to be warmed and filled and comforted; but go to them, and help them to relieve their sufferings. Remember what that Child said who is born to-day: Whatever you do to the poor, you do to Me. Be sure, then, that if you want to gain the full blessings of this happy solemnity, and to have a joy pure and worthy of such a day, you can secure all for yourself in your acts of charity to these favourites of Heaven. The Child Jesus, poor and outcast, will be a special Saviour to those, who have made themselves friends and saviours to the poor. These are the men of good will, to whom Angels proclaim peace to-day, and to whom will be given the everlasting joy and peace, which will be the result of the blessings inaugurated by the Incarnation and Birth of the Prince of Peace.

SERMON VII.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS.

THE OFFICE OF MARY IN THE INCARNATION AND BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

When the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a Woman.
Gal. iv. 4.

THESE words of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, are brought before us by the Church to-day, and suggest a thought which arises most naturally from the Festival, which we are still celebrating in honour of the Birth of our dear Lord, a thought always gladly entertained by a Catholic heart. The Apostle in the words which he uses, and the Church in adopting the words, both remind us of the intimate and exceptional connexion of the ever-blessed Virgin Mary, with the great event which is now imparting such joy to the Church. Intimately and exceptionally she must have been connected with the Mystery of the Incarnation and Birth of the only-begotten Son of God, inasmuch as the relationship between mother and child is that which can be shared by no other. The anxiety and joy alluded to by our Blessed Lord were illustrated in her instance. *A woman when she is in labour hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she hath brought forth the child she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.*[1] To Mary Bethlehem presented sorrow as well as joy, and a sorrow and joy which none could feel as she felt. We therefore, to whom her Maternity was extended, as we have become brothers and joint-heirs with Christ, must not lose sight of the fact of a connexion so real and so important. We owe everything to the Incarnation: let us consider what the Incarnation owed to Mary: that is to say, what part God destined for her in the accomplishment and the testimony of this great Mystery.

I. In the eternal decrees of God, when, as it is written in the head of the book of those decrees, the Eternal Son said to the

[1] John xvi. 21.

Father: *Behold, I come,*[2] the Father determined that the Son should take an outward created form, should become man, and should become man by being born; a mother, therefore, was essential. And when the time for the accomplishment of this decree had arrived, or, as St. Paul says, when the fulness of the time was come, then it was that *God sent His Son made of a woman.* The Mother therefore, made essential in the decrees of God, holds her prominent position in Bethlehem; and is gladly and reverentially acknowledged in her high and privileged office by the Church, who, in welcoming the Son into the world, cannot forget the presence of her who brought Him forth, and holds Him there in her arms to receive the homage and the acts of love of those who come to visit Him.

Read in the beginning of the holy Gospel of St. Luke the history of the Annunciation, and you will see how true the Eternal Father is to His decrees, and how, when the Mystery of the Incarnation is about to be accomplished, and the Son is to be sent into the world, the Woman, of whom He is to be made, is chosen and prepared for her office. The Archangel Gabriel is sent from before the face of God to make known to a Virgin, whose name was Mary, that she was the one, blessed amongst all women, who was to conceive and to bring forth a Son, whose name was to be called JESUS. She ponders and hesitates: she wonders, and asks how it was possible that she, a virgin, and one who was determined ever to continue a virgin, could become a mother. She had, indeed, heard of the prophecy announced by Isaias, that a Virgin was to conceive and bear a Son: but could she be the one? Was she the woman who was to undo the work of the first woman, and who was to trample upon the serpent's head, by bringing into the world Him that was to take away the sin of the world? Well might she in her humility ponder and hesitate, and ask in her surprise, how it could be done!

And it is only after she expresses her consent, that the Mystery is accomplished, and that the Eternal Son, He who had existed as God from all eternity, becomes Man, and is *made of a woman.* What power was there in that word of hers, *Fiat,* Be it done! The same word which was used by the Almighty in the creation of the world, and in bringing light into existence, is pronounced by Mary; and the Redeemer of the world, the true *Light which enlighteneth every man that comes into this world,* at once assumes His outward nature, and the Word becomes Flesh and dwells amongst us. 'The Word spoke,' says St. Thomas, 'and all things were made: Mary spoke, and the Word was made

[2] Heb. x. 7.

Flesh.'[3] It is an expression of her consent, and in her person of the consent of all mankind, to be pardoned and redeemed. For as Eve consented to the suggestion of the serpent, and thus brought sin upon mankind, Mary consents to the request of the Angel, and thus brings about our reconciliation with Heaven. The moment she says, *Be it done to me according to thy word*, the Holy Spirit effects the mystery within her sacred womb, and the Son of God becomes the Son of Man.

Well might she ponder before accepting such an office, when she knew what was implied in the dignity of such a Maternity. Who could have dared to accept it, but one who was predestined and prepared as she was? For it was not an office of dignity only: the Mother knew what went hand in hand with that dignity, and therefore what her Maternity implied. If we, by reading the prophecy of Isaias, can judge how truly the sorrows and sufferings of the Redeemer of the world were made known to those who lived in the days of the older dispensation, could Mary have been ignorant of what His career was to be? Did she not know that she was asked to give her consent to be the Mother of the Man of Sorrows, and therefore that she was herself to be the Mother of Sorrows? Almighty God did not keep and would not have kept a secret from her, what was to be the life of Him, who was to take upon Himself the work of atoning for the sins of men: a life of sorrows, contradictions, humiliations, and sufferings: preludes, indeed, to a future glory, but implying great realities in which she was to have her share.

She ponders, but she gives her consent; and then within her takes place the wonderful Mystery, The Body of our Lord is formed of her substance: it becomes flesh of her flesh, and bone of her bones. Soul and Body are united together, and the Sacred Humanity, in the first instant of its existence, is taken up into personal union with the Divine Nature of the Son of God. She feels and knows what has occurred, and Who has now taken up His abode within her. All at once she becomes the Temple of God,[4] and she is the first to pay to the Incarnate Word the adoration in which Angels quickly join, as it is written: *Let all the Angels of God adore Him.*[5] Here then is her privilege. Through her, God sends into the world *His Son, made of a woman.* And how can we, if we believe in the Incarnation, and in the mode of its fulfilment, ignore the presence of the Mother in the Birth of

[3] 'Dixit Verbum, et omnia facta sunt: dixit Maria, et Verbum caro factum est.' *Quoted by Nicolas;* 'Marie dans l'Evangile.'

[4] 'Templum repente fit Dei.' Hymn. ad Laudes in Nat. Dni.

[5] Ps. lxix. and Heb. i. 6.

her Son? How can we forget the part she had to play in the accomplishment of the great event, which brought joy and peace into the world, and is now spreading joy throughout the Church?

II. But it was not in the accomplishment alone, but also in the manifestation to the world of this mystery, that she had her office to fulfil. *God sent His Son, made of a woman;* and He made the woman the evangelist of the Mystery to the world, because it is really upon her testimony that this truth, so essential for salvation, has been communicated to us. It is St. Luke alone, among the Gospel writers, who gives the record of the Birth and Infancy of our dear Lord. And he is careful to tell us how he knew what he was recording. It was, of course, under the influence of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that he wrote his Gospel; for he was no exception to the rule laid down by St. Peter: *the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost.*[6] But the fact of writing under inspiration does not exclude human industry on the part of the sacred inspired writers; and St. Luke expressly and notably declares, that on his part this industry was not omitted. He tells us, at the opening of his Gospel, that he had had recourse for information to the best sources whence it could have been derived: that he had *diligently attained all things* from those who had been *eye-witnesses* of the facts.[7] He alone tells us of facts, which, having thus ascertained them from an eye-witness, can have been told him by Mary alone. All the facts which we consider in the five joyful mysteries of the Rosary are recorded only by him. He alone recites the details of the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Birth of Jesus, the Presentation in the Temple. From whom else but from Mary, an eye-witness, can he have heard the thrilling narration? And yet he did hear it, and he had diligently attained to the knowledge by questioning one who knew all, and who had borne so great a part in each event.

We can imagine St. Luke seated by the side of the holy Virgin-Mother, after the Ascension of her Son, at which time it was that he was gathering the materials for his Gospel, and noting down with scrupulous and reverential care every word which she, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit also, was moved to utter. She tells him first, by way of introduction to a greater Mystery, the wonders that had attended the birth of the Baptist; for she was present at the time that her cousin St. Elizabeth, already in her old age, became the mother of our Lord's Precursor. Then she passes on to relate what happened to herself, when the Archangel Gabriel came from heaven with his solemn message to her. She tells him of the Magnificat, and from her dictation he writes

[6] 2 Pet. i. 21. [7] Luke i. 2.

it down. She goes through the anxieties of the journey to Bethlehem, and tells of the answer she so often received, that there was *no room* for her anywhere except in the poor ruined stable, where she brought forth the Saviour of the world, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in the manger. She records the songs of Angels, and through her the Gloria in excelsis is contributed to the rich Liturgy of the Church. She describes the coming in of the wondering half-enlightened shepherds, who had been summoned by the Angels' song. The Circumcision and imposing the sacred name of Jesus is then narrated; and next follows the history of the Presentation of the Child in the Temple, her own Purification, and the painful prophecy of the aged Simeon. Then she goes over again the details of the Finding in the Temple, and of her admixture of sorrow and joy on that one recorded event in the boyhood of her Son.

Twice, however, you will notice that she seemingly refuses to continue the narration, and keeps to herself what concerned the hidden life of her Son, and was not therefore intended to be recorded. Just after relating how the shepherds came in and adored her newly-born Child, she suddenly stops, and declining, as it would seem, to answer the question as to what followed, nothing remained for the Evangelist but to write down, as he does: *But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.*[8] And a little later on, after the account of the finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, having stated that *He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them*, once more her lips are closed: she treasures up for herself the details of a Life which was then for many years to be spent with her and for her, in the happy retirement of their simple home, and again the Evangelist is obliged to state the fact of this silence: *And His Mother kept all these words in her heart.*[9] She was not to give testimony upon what so intimately concerned herself, but not others; and, therefore, the secrets of the first thirty years of Him, whose history is given to us in the Gospel, are treasured up for the use of contemplatives, who, by the example of those who lived at Nazareth, are to aim at the privileges of a *life hidden with Christ in God*.[10]

If it is not only the fact of the Incarnation, but the knowledge of it also, that is essential to us, for the Gospels have been written in order that we may believe and know our Redeemer, how much do we not owe to her, through whose consent the only-begotten Son of God became man, and through whom the knowledge of so many of the details of His life has been imparted to the world! And is it not right, therefore, in these joyful days when we are

[8] Luke ii. 19. [9] Ibid. ii. 51. [10] Col. iii. 3.

solemnising His Birth, to turn our thoughts upon the Virgin-Mother, whom God declared in the words of the Angel to have been *full of Grace, blessed amongst women*, and *of whom was born Jesus who is called the Christ?*

III. What are our duties resulting from these considerations? We have duties to God, who in His wisdom, power, and goodness, effected this Mystery, and brought it into reality in the way which was most in accordance with His attributes. It might have been otherwise. God might by some other means have accomplished our Redemption. And in decreeing that He would do it by the humiliation of His Son, He might have sent Him into this world in some other mode: He might have given Him a body, at once formed as was that of Adam, in the fulness of the growth of manhood; but He would not do so: *He sent His Son, made of a woman.* He preferred to give Him a Mother. It is for us, then, to enter into His plans: to acknowledge that Mother: to give her her place in the divine economy of our Redemption; and not to pretend that we can think of the Son, and forget that Mother. It is for us to offer our thanksgiving to Him who has so exalted our nature, by bestowing the dignity of the divine Maternity on a creature like to ourselves, descended from the same common parent, involved in the same ruin, though exceptionally preserved from every stain of sin, requiring a Redeemer as we do, and sharing most abundantly in the graces brought into the world by Him, who through her came hither to accomplish the work committed to Him. May God be for ever praised and thanked for having given us such a Redeemer, and for having given Him such a Mother!

To the Mother also we have duties which we must recognise and fulfil: duties the more obligatory upon us, because unfortunately there are those who ignore her office and privilege, and who pretend to see and acknowledge the Son, but never in the arms or at the breast of His Immaculate Mother. In her regard we have to venerate her holiness. How great must it have been, to have fitted her for her high and noble position! How great, that even God should proclaim her fulness of Grace through the words of one of His own seraphic attendants! As St. Paul argues in favour of the greatness of Christ and His superiority over the Angels, inasmuch as to none of them did God ever say: *Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten thee;*[11] so must her greatness, by virtue of her Maternity, have exceeded theirs, and so must she have inherited a more excellent name than they, for to none of the Angels was it ever said: Thou art My Mother; this day hast thou

[11] Heb. i. 5.

begotten Me! To the Angels, indeed, we owe honour, because they are closer to God than we are, and hold the highest rank in the order of creatures; but more do we owe to her who is exalted above them, and whom, because of her exaltation, the Church styles the Queen of Angels.

A duty of gratitude also do we owe to her, and for a double reason. We owe it because of the care and tenderness with which she nursed that Child, screened Him from danger, and preserved a life so sacred and so valuable. If we cannot help being indignant at those who in Bethlehem refused their hospitality: if we protest with all our power against the cruelty with which one Herod persecuted Him as an infant, and another, joining with His bitterest enemies, persecuted Him even to death, must we not be moved with love and sympathy and thankfulness towards that best and holiest of mothers, who watched over Him in His infancy, and protected Him against all the dangers and sufferings of His early life? If He had been born rich, and in the midst of acts of welcome from the world, there would have been less call for the Mother's love, and less reason for the Child to cling so closely to her for shelter; and therefore His poverty and privations, which increased the necessity of maternal watchfulness, are reasons for greater love on His part, and, on His account, for greater thankfulness from us. And on our own account also do we owe her a duty of gratitude, because in becoming His Mother she has been made Mother to us, and has so constantly on that account extended over us her influence and her protection.

Confidence in this protection is another duty we owe to her, who has been made Mother to us. Our Blessed Lord, her own Child, never doubted her, nor ought we to doubt her. She led Him safely through all His trials; and with the aid of her faithful spouse St. Joseph, she rescued him from every danger. So will she do to those who, sharing the fraternity of Jesus, share her maternity; and by the power of her intercession we shall be screened from the dangers of our spiritual enemies, and be conducted safely on our way to heaven.

Here, then, we have something to encourage us in connexion with the great solemnity of the Birth of our dearest Lord. We are close upon the commencement of another year; and as our Blessed Lord commenced His life by clinging to His Mother, so may we at the outset of another period of our life do what He did. She must be interested in regard of those for whom her Son did so much, and for whose sake He became man, and through her entered into the world, sent by His Father, and *made of a woman*. From her was He born: from her did He

receive the glorious name of JESUS. And as God destined her to be the bridge by which He passed from heaven to earth, so, if we strengthen ourselves by her prayers and cling with confidence upon her protection, we shall find her to be a means through which the blessings of the Incarnation will be communicated to us, and a bridge by which we shall be able to pass securely from earth to heaven.

SERMON VIII.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR BLESSED LORD.

His name was called Jesus. Luke ii. 21.

The very short Gospel appointed by the Church for this day's Festival, consisting of only one verse, contains within it a great fulness of matter, and suggests thoughts which are devout in themselves, and very appropriate to the solemnity which we are celebrating. It tells us how our dearest Saviour, having through obedience come down upon earth, did through the same obedience submit to the law of circumcision, and on the eighth day, the day fixed for that rite, received the holy Name of Jesus. It reminds us that that Name was not chosen through mere fancy or for any human reason, but that it had been already destined for Him, having formed a portion of the message of the Archangel Gabriel, when he came down from heaven on the day of the Annunciation, to declare to the chosen Virgin-Mother the Mystery that was to be accomplished. It is well, therefore, that the Church, who, in her instinctive love for that Saviour who brought such blessings to the world, loses not sight of a single incident recorded of Him, invites us to assist with her at the commemoration of the bestowal of that Name, and to ponder upon its meaning, its lessons, and the reality of the blessings which are associated with it.

I. The Gospel, in recording the fact of the circumcision of our dear Lord, does not enter into the details of the ceremonial of such an institution. Something had already been told in the account given of the circumcision of St. John the Baptist. There we read that it was usual to give some family name, and that the friends of the parents of the Baptist were surprised at this custom not being observed, when they had expressed their wish that he should be called John. From what we read there also, it seems to have been usual to ask the parents to announce what name was to be imposed; for it was first of all Elizabeth, and afterwards Zachary, who said: *He shall be called John.*[1] When

[1] Luke i. 60, 63.

therefore the holy Child of Bethlehem was about to undergo the act of circumcision, and Mary and Joseph would both have been asked by what Name He was to be called, we can imagine with what reverence both of them, in obedience to the intimation which each had separately received, would have said: He shall be called JESUS. For, as at the Annunciation the Mother had been forewarned of the Name destined for Him, so had the holy Joseph in an hour of deep anxiety been relieved of his fear and perplexity, when the Angel appeared to him, and told him not to fear, because He that was to be born of Mary had been conceived through the work of the Holy Ghost: *And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His Name* JESUS.[2]

Did this name contradict and leave unfulfilled the prophecies which had been recorded, regarding the name destined for Him who was to come and do the great work of the Messias? By the prophet Isaias, when he foretold the wonderful event of the Virgin conceiving and bearing a Son, it was declared: *and His name shall be called Emmanuel.*[3] And afterwards, when Almighty God promises the reign of joy which was to come after the afflictions then multiplied upon the people of Israel, the cause of this joy and His names are heralded forth in these words: *For* A CHILD IS BORN *to us, and a Son is given to us, and the government is upon His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace.*[4] And the prophet Zacharias had also been commissioned to foretel the coming and the name of the future great High Priest of the New Testament: *Behold, a Man, the Orient is His name.*[5] Why was it, then, it may occur to us to ask, that a Name not mentioned by the prophets, was announced by the Angel, and that the Name JESUS should have been substituted in their stead? It is well for us to ask this question; for in the answer we shall find new glories and mysteries in that Name which surpasses all others, and in which alone salvation is to be found; *for there is no other Name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved.*[6]

The glory of the Name JESUS is so great that it contains at once within itself all that was implied by the various names assigned for the Redeemer of the world, by the prophets who had announced His coming and His office. When St. Peter was called upon by the princes of the people and the ancients of Jerusalem to account for the fact of his healing the lame man at the door of the Temple, his apology consisted in announcing the

[2] Matt. i. 21. [3] Is. vii. 14. [4] Ibid. ix. 16.
[5] Zach. iv. 12. [6] Acts iv. 12.

glories of the Name JESUS. *Ye princes of the people and ancients, hear! If we are this day examined concerning the good deed done to the infirm man, by what means he hath been made whole, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the Name of our Lord* JESUS *Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him this man standeth here before you whole.*[7] We could imagine that if we were to question Almighty God how it could have been that mankind, whom the poor crippled man not unfittingly represented, was through a Mystery effected by a single word and act of His, restored to its original innocence and to the power of entering into heaven, outside of the gates of which man was lying in so helpless a state, He would answer us as St. Peter did his questioners, and tell us of the efficacy of the Name JESUS: the Name describing the union of the two natures in one Person,—the nature of man, inasmuch as He was crucified; and the nature of God, inasmuch as by His own power He rose again from the dead.

As the Name JESUS signifies Saviour, it implies that He who bore the name and office of Saviour was Emmanuel, *God with us*; because He was God and one of us at the same time; for this is what the Incarnation implies: the union of the two natures in one and the same Person. The name JESUS is also Wonderful; for St. Paul tells us that it is such that heaven, earth, and those under the earth tremble and bow down at its sound. It signifies Counsellor, and God the Mighty, inasmuch as the Wisdom and Omnipotence of God were displayed in the Mystery by which the Word was made Flesh. He was the Ruler; because of His reign, the Creed reminds us, there will be no end: and He has bought us for Himself and made us a *purchased people*[8] of His own. And He was the Prince of Peace; because His mission was one of peace. He came to give us peace: and at His Birth Angels sang, *Peace on earth to men of good will.* And He is the Orient; because He arose as a light to them that sat in darkness, as the Psalmist[9] and the father of the Precursor[10] had both foretold.

And what mysteries are not implied in this glorious Name! It proclaims the glory of God, secured and advanced in an infinite degree by what the Son did for the Father, in assuming an outward nature in which He adored that Father. It tells us of the love of Angels for men, because for our sake they gave such honour to that Name. It speaks of the fear of devils, who

[7] Acts iv. 8-10.
[8] 1 Pet. ii. 9.
[9] Ps. cxi.
[10] Luke i. 78.

tremble at its sound. It comprises within itself the whole theology of man's Redemption. It implies the whole economy of Grace: it is a pledge of the conversion of sinners, of the perseverance and merits of the just. It preaches to us a future judgment, and accounts for the glory given to the Saints in Heaven. Such are the glories and the mysteries of that Name. And what a thrill of joy to the Angels and the just, and what a trembling of fear to the evil spirits, must have run through the universe, when Mary and Joseph at the circumcision of the Divine Child, with veneration and with the warmest love, pronounced the words: 'Let His Name be called JESUS!'

II. How well this Name was fitted for our dear Lord we cannot doubt, when we call to mind all that has been done, all that will be done, and that is even now being done by Him who came down from heaven to assume it, and to do the great work of redeeming the world, as the Name implied He should do. Not only are there glories and mysteries attached to the holy Name JESUS, but there is a reality associated with it, which it concerns each of us during these great solemnities to consider.

In the first place, we see the reality in what has been done by virtue of that Name. JESUS has saved us. The prophecies have been fulfilled, and the Angel's word has come to pass. He has saved His people from their sins. The great work of reconciling sinful man with his offended God has taken place. Heaven is no longer closed: its gates are now open, and the souls of the just in many thousands have entered in; and all by virtue of the Name of JESUS. It is a glorious article of Christian faith that the Incarnation has been effected: that man has been exalted, the devil and sin conquered by Him, who bore the *Name above all names*. JESUS has become Man: He has done the will of His Father: He has humbled Himself; and therefore God has raised Him up, and has given to Him and to His Name all the glory which He so justly merited by His obedience. The whole world now looks back with the most fervent thankfulness to the Day of the Circumcision, and to that act in which was imposed upon its Redeemer the glorious Name of JESUS.

But the efficacy of the Name has not been exhausted. It still has its work to do in our regard: we still have a future before us; and in order to secure the happiness and promises of that future, we have to rely for our perseverance upon the power of the Name JESUS. If faith tells us what He who bore that Name has done for us, Hope combines with Faith in telling us what He still has to do and will do for us. Now, at the beginning of a year, looking forward to the future, we are cheered on by the confidence inspired

into us by that powerful Name. It is true that Advent has passed, during which time we were especially looking forward to an event which has now been accomplished. As far as that event is concerned, hope is now turned into possession; but yet even to-day, on the Octave-day of the Birth of our dear Lord, the Church addresses us in the words of St. Paul to Titus; and in the Epistle of this Festival she bids us, as the holy Apostle bade those of his time, to *look for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* For we are still in a state of struggle and of anxiety for the future. We are still, each and all of us, upon earth, journeying on towards our true and lasting home, to which we shall only be able to arrive in absolute security, when we shall have run through the career destined for us.

But what has been done is a pledge for what will be done. The Price has been paid for our Redemption, and we have our right of entering into Heaven; a right of which we shall not be deprived, unless through our own waywardness and wilfulness we sacrifice what has been secured for us. Shall we do so? Can we do so? Can we be so untrue to our own interests, as to allow ourselves to lose what has been gained for us by Him, who has done so much for us, and who really asks us in return to do so little for ourselves? Perseverance, my dear brethren, is everything for us. But shall we persevere? This is a question which concerns the future. But when we have such a glorious Name and banner to fight under, why shall we not persevere? The great work, so well and so efficaciously begun, must not through our own unfaithfulness and faintheartedness be allowed to fail in its issue. It is not in ourselves but in His Name we have hope: *being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus.*[11] To-day, therefore, with all the confidence and cheerfulness which a fresh starting upon a career can always command, we must look forward to the completion of what has been so happily begun, and to the ultimate bestowal of a reward already purchased for us by the glorious Name JESUS.

Still more, my dear brethren: it is not with the past and the future alone we are concerned in what has been done and will be done by this all-saving Name. JESUS has saved us, and will save us: and He is saving us. Even now the work of our salvation is going on, and at every moment, in every act which we perform, in every prayer which we offer up to Heaven, in every trial which we bear with patience, the Name of JESUS is doing its work in our regard. Truly He is Emmanuel, God with us. Grace, the fruit

[11] Philip. i. 6.

of the Mystery of the Incarnation, is a present gift, as glory is a future one; and the present is the time in which, by the help of Grace, we are to gain and secure that reward which is stored up for us in the future. As in our natural life the air which we breathe supports us, and makes us active and able to sustain the labours incident to life, so in the supernatural state Grace keeps us alive, and enables us with vigour and success to practise the virtues and avoid the dangers of the spiritual life. And whence comes Grace? It is He who bears the Name of JESUS who has brought Grace and is ever applying it to our souls. Hear what St. John says, announcing His coming amongst us: *We have seen His glory, the glory as it were of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. . . . And of His fulness we have all received, grace for grace.*[12] And of Himself our dear Lord said: *I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly.*[13] And expressly of His Name, St. Paul says: *You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*[14]

What is that we do not at this present moment, and in each moment of our life, owe to the glorious Name given to our Lord on the day of His Circumcision! Without Him we can do nothing, for so has He truly told us;[15] but with Him we can do all things, as St. Paul with such noble confidence affirmed of himself: *I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me.*[16] The work of this glorious Name is always going on. It is this Name which at the present moment is the cause of the joy of the Saints in heaven: JESUS not only has saved them, but He is even now constituting their happiness. It is this Name which is the secret of the strength of the Church, in her long-suffering and unwearied perseverance in struggling against the world and the enemies of God. It is this Name which, at the same time that it is bringing down Grace in unceasing streams upon the earth which is now redeemed, enables earth, through the prayers and songs of the faithful, to be returning streams of love and of thanksgiving to heaven.

In every prayer which we send forth to the Throne of God, it is the Name of JESUS which gives it force to travel, and to find its way to that seat of mercy: for so do we end our prayer, 'Through our Lord Jesus Christ.' In every good work which we perform, by which we please God and merit His blessing, if we are asked: In what name have you done this? our answer is: In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In every Sacrament, which has brought a beginning or an increase of Grace to our souls, the Name of

[12] John i. 14, 16. [13] Ibid. x. 10. [14] 1 Cor. vi. 11.
[15] John xv. 5. [16] Philip. iv. 13.

JESUS works its effect and impresses itself upon our soul. In every temptation which we successfully resist, and thus overcome a spiritual enemy, the victory has been gained by virtue of this Name. In every suffering, or sacrifice, or trial, which we have met with and are ever meeting in this valley of tears, strength, comfort, and peace are secured, because the Name of JESUS is whispered at the time by Angels of comfort, who do for us what they did for Him, Who in the time of anguish refused not to be ministered unto by an Angel from heaven. Therefore, if we owe to the most holy Name of JESUS our tribute of Faith, because of what He who bore that Name has done for us: of Hope, because of what He will do for us,—Love comes and claims to join its tribute, because of what that Name is doing for us, as we are journeying on in our way to heaven.

Then JESUS has saved me, will save me, and is saving me. So am I taught as I go upon the Day of Circumcision to assist at that rite, and hear the order given by His Blessed Mother: Let His Name be called JESUS! Is not this a good, a holy, and an encouraging thought with which to enter upon the commencement of a new year? Let ALL FOR JESUS be the motto for this year: the principle that will run through it: the light which will shine around it! At such a time we cannot help looking back upon the past; but it is not with a despairing look, when we remember what a pledge we have for forgiveness of the sins of the past, in the powerful plea for mercy, which is contained in the invocation of the Name of JESUS. Naturally also we look forward speculating upon the future; but we do not despond, when we call to mind what a pledge we have for perseverance, if we pray for it confidently through the all-saving Name of JESUS. And as day passes after day, we shall be supported and encouraged in the duties of each, when we try to sanctify the thoughts, words, and acts of our daily life, by uniting ourselves with Him in whose Name all will be done, and therefore all will be blessed. Thus let us learn in practice to love and to value the Name of JESUS. It will be our sustaining power during life, and our strength and comfort in death. Always in our heart, and often on our lips, it will be the last word we shall pronounce in this world, and it will be the first sound we shall hear upon our entrance into Eternity!

SERMON IX.

FIRST SUNDAY IN THE YEAR.

REALISING THE INCARNATION.

He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works. Tit. ii.

THERE is a fault which we are very apt to incur, in connexion with the great Mysteries of religion, namely, that we do not bring them home sufficiently to ourselves, make them influence our practice, and tell upon the conduct of our lives. We are inclined to look upon them, or some of them at least, as matters of doctrine and of theory only, rather than of practice: as if they belonged exclusively to the province of Dogmatic theology, and had nothing to say to Moral. Of course we do not deny or disbelieve them: God forbid! We include them in our Acts of Faith: we accept them without doubt, however mysterious they are: we bow down to them with submission and reverential love. But yet, we sometimes stop there; and the fault is, our not going further, and applying these truths for daily and practical use in our spiritual life.

Take, for instance, the deep and glorious Mystery of the Incarnation, which at this time is held before us as the chief object of our faith and devotion. We all believe, and we glory in believing, in this central doctrine of the Christian creed. We believe that the *Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us*: and in that profession of faith especially drawn up to define and defend this Mystery, we declare our belief that, *for us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven: was Incarnate through the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man.* But may it not be the case that we believe it as a matter of history: as a fact that is of the past: an event which occurred some eighteen centuries ago? We date our era from this event, and thus mix it up with the annals of bygone times. What we, perhaps, forget is, that the Incarnation is not a past fact; it still is in existence. There was a time when the Word had not yet

become Flesh, but that time has past. There is not a time, and now there never will be a time, when the Word is not Flesh. The Incarnation is not an exhausted fact, which existed for a time, had its influence, and is now over. It is an enduring fact, still in existence. The Sacred Humanity is still subsisting; as St. Paul says: *Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever.* And our Lord says of Himself, speaking to His Church: *Behold, I am with you for ever.* It is not that Christ lived, and laboured, and died for those only who were His contemporaries in the days of His visible sojourn on earth: He died for all—for those who had lived before, and for all who are to come after. To those who had lived before, He applied His merits, having prepared them by anticipation, by their faith in His future coming. But for us who have come after, He has done something more: He wishes us to realise His Incarnation in a manner in which those of the older dispensation could not have done. For us He has lived and laboured, as well as died: He has given us an example which they knew not of; and it is in the studying of this that our duty lies, as it is in forgetting it that our fault consists.

It is well for us in these holy days, and especially now so early in a new year, to attend to this duty, and to correct the fault if we find it to exist. What do we mean by realising the Incarnation?

1. The sacred Scriptures repeatedly urge upon us the duty of influencing our lives and conduct, by bringing home to ourselves in a practical manner lessons taught us by the Incarnation of the Son of God. We can well understand how the Apostles, who had seen our Blessed Lord, and whose characters had been formed by their close intercourse with Him, must have studied that Life, and must have thought upon the virtues which they there saw manifested, as illustrations of the high lessons He was always inculcating. Take, for instance, St. John, the disciple and the teacher of love. He begins his Epistles, in which he so beautifully and fervently speaks upon fraternal charity, by alluding at once to the experience he had had of Him, from whom he had heard so many instructions on a duty which was to be characteristic of His followers. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled . . . . that which we have seen and have heard, we declare unto you.*[1] And St. Peter in both his Epistles urges the Mystery of the Incarnation, and the fact of our being thereby redeemed, as a great motive for our leading lives corresponding with the state to which we are exalted.

[1] 1 John i. 1, 3.

He does not hesitate to say that we have been made *partakers of the Divine nature*;[2] and that on this account we ought to fly all sin, as incompatible with our fellowship with Christ. *A chosen generation*, he elsewhere calls us, *a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people*;[3] and therefore ought we to be invested with all the virtues becoming our holy calling.

And St. Paul, though not privileged, as were the first chosen twelve, to have studied the perfection of a Christian life in the presence and at the feet of Him who chose and instructed them, lived too near His time and was too familiar with those who had conversed with Him, not to be influenced by such a Life. Take the text which we have selected from the Epistle of this day, and you see how he affirms the principle on which we are insisting. *He gave Himself for us*, not only *that He might redeem us from all iniquity*, but also *that He might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, and a pursuer of good works*. And several times during the Christmas solemnities, we have had read to us from his Epistle to Titus, the words in which he declares how the Mystery of the Incarnation teaches us: *the Grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and piously in this world*.[4] And to the same effect are those sayings of his, in which he declares that by our fellowship with Christ through the Incarnation, we have *put off the old man*, and have *put on the new*;[5] that we have become *in Christ a new creature*.[6] And he uses the strong argument how we ought to treat our bodies, which have been so ennobled by this Mystery: *Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, and you are not your own? for you are bought with a great Price: glorify and bear about God in your body*.[7] And such effect had these lessons upon himself, that he was able to say: *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me . . . I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself for me*.[8]

Now, my dear brethren, what is the object of all these admonitions and sayings of the Apostles? It certainly is not the language of mere compliment or enthusiasm, or the expression of an exaggerated view of what the Incarnation has brought upon us. It is the language of truth, for it is the Spirit of God who has uttered it. All this is written for our instruction, in order that we may be brought to feel that this great Mystery, which we

[2] 2 Pet. i. 4. [3] 1 Pet. ii. 9. [4] 1 Tit. ii. 11, 12.
[5] Eph. iv. 22. [6] 2 Cor. v. 17. [7] 1 Cor. vi. 19.
[8] Gal. ii. 20.

are now contemplating, and which at this Christmas season comes before us in renewed freshness, is not to be an object of faith merely, but that it must enter into our very souls, that it must for ever live in our hearts, that its recollection must attend us in every circumstance of life, animate us in our Christian combat, and serve as an effective shield and security against the attacks of sin.

Compare in our regard the effects of Creation and the Incarnation: compare ourselves as creatures, with what we have become by Redemption; and it ought not to be, that in the former regard we present a reality with which the latter has no counterpart. *He said, and they were made*:[9] this is the history of Creation, sudden, rapid, and decisive. *He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross*:[10] this is the history of the Incarnation, implying labour, suffering, and sacrifice. Both are for us, and we are objects of both: we are created, and we are redeemed. If, then, the fact of Creation is so stamped upon every object to which it has been applied, that each proclaims itself a creature, and the finger of God who created it can be seen in each, ought not the fact of being redeemed to present itself in every one, in whom this great work has produced its effect? If the lives of Christians were analysed, if the structure of their conduct were examined, there ought to be found in them evidences of the state to which they have been raised, and traces of a resemblance to Him, who, in becoming like unto us, has exalted us to a dignity like to His own.

Certainly, the Incarnation has exalted us by the fellowship which has thence resulted between ourselves and Him who has become like to us, and has made us like to Himself. The great St. Leo, in one of his noble discourses upon the Mystery of the Incarnation, explains what was the result of that Mystery upon man. Jesus Christ, he says, came down from heaven, like a rich merchant, to establish upon earth a commerce of salvation by making a wondrous interchange of property with us. He has come to receive what we have, and to give us what He possessed. And St. Augustine explains what this interchange was, when he says: He took upon Himself our evils, and gave to us His good. It is then a truth beyond any doubt, that by the Incarnation there has been added to us something beyond what we have received by Creation: something nobler, something richer, something which strengthens the connexion between ourselves and Almighty

[9] Ps. cxlviii. [10] Phil. ii. 7.

God, which has reëstablished that connexion which had once by man's sin been unhappily severed. And what the Church wishes to impress upon us as one of the lessons of the great solemnities we have been celebrating, is that we should realise the great Mystery in our own regard, and allow it to produce constantly upon us the effect which it is calculated to produce; thus following out what the Apostles have taught us in their high lessons upon the Incarnation.

II. Let us now come to practice, and see how this is to be done. Our Blessed Lord undoubtedly intended His life to influence ours by the example which He set us. He became Man, to show us what men ought to aim at, and what are the perfections of which our nature is capable. On one occasion He says to His Apostles: *I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also.*[11] And these words are applicable, and were intended to refer, not to that one act only, the washing of the feet of His disciples, but to His whole Life. He differed from other teachers, the philosophers as they are called, founders of various schools of thought, and speculators upon the nature of truth, in this, that they never dared to hold out their own life as a model for the imitation of their followers; but this was exactly what our dear Lord did, and most earnestly required. The Gospel, therefore, is not merely a collection of facts and sayings intended to be pondered upon, and to be admired, and assented to; but in it there is given to us a model Life, which we are to try to imitate. And thus the words of our dear Lord, holding out His own example to us, are taken up by the Apostles, when they are preaching upon the perfection of a Christian life. *Christ suffered for us*, says St. Peter, *leaving you an example that you should follow His steps.*[12] And St. Paul, who had studied for his own guidance the Life of His Redeemer, proposes it to us: *Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.*[13] And hence the proverbial saying: Christianus alter Christus: a Christian is another Christ.

The first result of this attempt to realise the Incarnation, in imitating the Life of our dear Lord, must be, that it will be an effectual preservative against sin; for the view of sin in such circumstances bears with it something of the nature of sacrilege: profaning that which is set apart for holy uses. *Glorify and bear about God in your body*, we have seen is St. Paul's admonition. And in the Epistle of to-day, as we see in our text, he says that the first object of Christ in giving Himself to us was, *that He might redeem us from all iniquity*. Where can you find a more exalting argument for keeping you from sin, than in the reflection

[11] John xiii. 15. [12] 1 Pet. ii. 21. [13] 1 Cor. iv. 16; xi. 1.

that you are bearing about in your body, limbs which are doubly sanctified: sanctified in their resemblance to the limbs borne by Him, who *took upon Himself the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of a man*;[14] and sanctified too because they are the temple of the Holy Ghost: *Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, and that you are not your own?*[15] This is what Baptism has made us, and what we ought to strive to keep ourselves, in guarding the innocence with which, through that Baptism, we were invested. You may have heard, my dear brethren, of a fault committed sometimes in the early ages of the Church, against which the clergy of the time had to exert themselves, of deferring one's baptism until late in life, through the dread of ever sullying the robe which we are ordered at that time to bear unspotted up to the time of our judgment.[16] Though it was a great sin, and a tempting of Providence, thus to run the risk of dying unbaptised, yet the pretext alleged by some, however unjustifiable, is an affirmation of the fear entertained by such persons, of ever falling away from one's first innocence. We ought to share their fear, without partaking in their fault.

On any occasion of a temptation to sin, give proper consideration to this argument, and you cannot fail to experience its force. Shall these hands, you will say, which are so like to those which the Infant Saviour stretched out to welcome His visitors in Bethlehem: which He held over the people, and laid upon the heads of children, as He blessed them during the days of His ministry: which were afterwards pierced through, when for our sake He was fastened to the Cross: shall they be made instrumental in sinning, and be thus raised up in rebellion against God? Shall these feet, in like manner, ever bear me in the direction of sin? Moses, in the days of old, was told to take the shoes off his feet, because the ground on which he stood was holy. Every step which I take is on holy ground; for the earth has opened and has budded forth its Saviour; and my own feet are holy, like to those which bore about this Saviour, as He went around doing good, and which afterwards flowed with Blood upon Calvary. And above all, shall my heart, which is formed even as was the Sacred Heart of Jesus, shall it ever encourage and give shelter to thoughts of uncharitableness, or of such a kind as it would be blasphemy to suppose could ever have breathed a dimness on the perfect purity of that Heart, which is meant as a model for my own? Away then, far away, every idea of the possibility of deliberate sin!

This practice of realising the Incarnation is a preservative

[14] Phil. ii. 7. [15] 1 Cor. vi. 19.
[16] See Bergier, Dict. de Théol. v. Cliniques.

against sin ; but more than that, it is an incentive to virtue. For if the *Life of Jesus is to be manifested in our bodies*,[17] as St. Paul admonishes, we are to remember that that was a devoted, certainly not an inactive, Life. A fault in our efforts to attain the perfection demanded of us oftentimes is, that they are too negative : we are too easily satisfied by abstaining from what is more palpably evil, and are too indolent about the earnest exercise of positive virtues. Yet does not our text assure us, that our Blessed Lord gave Himself not only to redeem us from all iniquity, but also to *cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works?* What an unworthy imitator of the Life of Christ is the tepid indolent Christian ! Where, in such an one, do we find the resemblance to the laborious, self-sacrificing model held before us in the Gospel? Take the virtues of the Hidden Life, which we may well make an object of our study in these days which follow the Mystery of His Birth. What humility is found accompanying Him into His solitude, as it had first brought Him down from heaven ! See how the obedience exercised towards His Father in heaven, in His coming down into Bethlehem, is continued towards Mary and Joseph, when He went down with them into Nazareth, and was subject to them ! The poverty and hardships in the midst of which He is introduced into the world, find no mitigation in that poor outcast state which followed upon His Infancy. Nor was it a life of idleness ; for St. Bonaventure had good reasons to write down the result of his meditations upon this portion of our Blessed Lord's career, when he describes Him to us as working hard under the direction of St. Joseph, and contributing his share of labour to the maintenance of the Home of Nazareth.

And in His Active Life, what a protest do we not find against the pride and self-indulgence of the world, in the continued humility by which He is everywhere distinguished ! He had come to make atonement for the consequences of pride and disobedience ; and, therefore, His Life and His lessons are constant condemnations of the pride, sensuality, love of riches, contempt of the poor, unforgiveness, and self-love, which found no patronage in His company. The day spent in deeds of charity, and in preaching lessons of love : the night spent in prayer and in communion with His Father : such is an epitome of His career. *Pertransiit benefaciendo* :[18] *He went about doing good*, is St. Peter's panegyric of the Founder of Christianity. And if we are bound to imitate Him, surely this ought to be the description of our career also.

Upon what a high motive are not duties to our neighbour here inculcated ! These form a very great portion of your daily

[17] 2 Cor. iv. 10. [18] Acts x. 38.

duties, and the omission or the wrong fulfilment of them forms a heavy contribution to your daily faults. The Mystery of the Incarnation has made us all to be doubly brothers, and therefore makes the law of fraternal charity to be doubly binding. We are not fellow-creatures only, but we have all been raised to a fraternity with our dear Lord, and through Him with each other. Whatever we have said of the respect we owe to ourselves because of our fellowship with Christ, we must admit to be true of each neighbour. *Whatever you have done to one of these little ones, you have done to Me,*[19] is the practical mode in which our dear Lord places these duties before us. You are bearing about God in your body; but so is your neighbour. And if you avoid sin, because you rightly fear that you will thereby be in some manner profaning what belongs to Christ, avoid all injuries against your neighbour, and do all the good you can towards him, because of his fellowship with the Incarnate Word. If your neighbour require charity at your hands, refuse it not, because in him you are assisting Christ Himself. If he ask forgiveness, grant it at once, for the sake of Him whom he resembles. If you have injured him, seek reconciliation speedily, because in your estrangement from him, you are alienated from One with whom he is so closely associated.

These, my dear brethren, may seem to be merely general lessons, and to be wanting in the power of suggesting special resolutions, which a more particular instruction might inspire. But there is a reason for bringing them before you now, whilst we are still at the commencement of a new year, and are looking forward in a kind of general way to the duties of the time which may still be before us. This year will bring with it many duties: here is one good and high motive by which they may all be directed. The Church all through the year will not forget the Mystery of the Incarnation, but will ever be placing one or another of the details of the Life of our dear Lord before us, in order to help us on towards the perfection to which every Christian is called. On the first day of the year, the Name of your dear Saviour was placed before you, that you might study its lessons, and might keep it in mind, as forming the motto under which you are determined to proceed in the course upon which you are entering. Go forward: realise the Name; and starting with the good spirit with which your connexion with that Name must animate you, you will find that He who took it for your sake will bear you up in all your efforts, and will bless you in your progress, as He now blesses you on the outset of your journey.

[19] Matt. xxv. 40.

SERMON X.

THE EPIPHANY.

We have come to adore Him.

The Solemnity which we are celebrating this day, the Epiphany or Manifestation of our Lord, has always been ranked by the Church amongst the most glorious of her Festivals. It commemorates an event which must have brought great joy into the poor stable of Bethlehem: an event in which something of an outward tribute was paid to Him for Whom the world had been sighing: of Whom Prophets and Psalmists had preached and sung; and yet Who, when He came, was allowed to lie in His poor crib unnoticed, unwelcomed, and uncared for. It tells us of the immense influence of Divine Grace, and how abundantly fidelity to it is crowned and rewarded. The Epiphany, indeed, may be called the Festival of Grace, as Christmas is of the Incarnation. It so abounds with practical lessons, that the gaining of souls seems a kind of necessary consequence of a study and an observance of the Festival, and gives cause, therefore, additionally for thanksgiving and joy.

The event of the Epiphany is fully recorded in the Gospel of the day. St. Matthew is its Evangelist; for it was he that was especially commissioned and inspired to record those events in the Life of our Lord, which were most calculated to influence the Jews; and the coming of the Wise men or Kings from the East was an event which could not have been ignored by them, especially as it served to rebuke them for rejecting the Messias, notwithstanding all the opportunities they had of knowing and accepting Him. You know that the Angels' song was Glory to God, and Peace to men. The first work was fulfilled, for man could not prevent it. In that quiet poor little stable of Bethlehem there was pouring forth a stream of Glory to God, which upon earth before never had been and never could be equalled. The most fervid offerings of love and adoration of men and Angels, all added together, were outbalanced in value and accept-

ableness by one beating of the Sacred Heart of that Infant, as He reposed on His Mother's lap, or slept with apparent unconsciousness in His poor hard crib.

But Peace was also to be given to men of good will. Where are they? The shepherds had come and gone: they may have tried to draw others to do what they had done, and probably only met with scorn and denial. And the inhospitable people of Bethlehem, who had been unmoved by the gentle but pressing request for shelter from the anxious Mother and the venerable Joseph, were not likely to be influenced by what they would consider the improbable story of simple visionary shepherds.

And so God now sends another messenger to other people. He fulfils a prophecy spoken many centuries before by Balaam amongst the Gentiles. A mysterious Star arises in the East, and in quick obedience to its summons three royal pilgrims set out upon a journey, determined to follow what they felt to be an intimation from Heaven. To-day, then, the Gentiles are called to supply for the negligence of the privileged but unfaithful Jews. This is the Christmas Day of the Gentiles, among whom we are numbered; and therefore it is a Festival of great joy to us. Let us enter into its spirit, and especially let us study the example of our first Apostles. It will be very instructive; and we shall find very much contained in the words by which they expressed their act: *We have come to adore Him.*

In this act we shall find three distinct stages: the preparation, the journey, and the arrival. And as the Star was to them what Divine Grace is to us, we shall consider these three stages in our dealing with this Gift of God. For it is Divine Grace which moves us to commence a good act, which helps us in its progress, and which insures its success.

I. The Wise men see the Star, and thereupon commence their work of preparation. They at once interpret it as a messenger from God, yield to the impulse of following it, and begin to take the necessary steps. What a beautiful and striking illustration does this afford of the influence of Grace in moving a soul! For Grace is a light in the soul which makes it see the Will of God: it is an attraction which draws it towards following that Will; and a help which enables it to act in accordance with it. Already in the stable of Bethlehem our Blessed Lord begins the work, which He at one time said He would particularly accomplish upon the Cross, of drawing all things to Himself; and the Wise men follow towards the spot, to which He is then attracting them. What fidelity and promptitude do they exhibit!

And yet what a slender motive had they to undertake the task

upon which they were entering, when compared with what had been vouchsafed to others, who refused to do what was pressed upon them by so much stronger reasons! They were not called by Angels, as the shepherds and the Bethlehemites were. They had not all the traditions and the intimations from Prophets, which the unfaithful Jews knew and ought to have believed. It is a mute messenger which appears to them; but they understand it, and at once obey its beckoning. They are not subdued into believing by the preaching and miracles of Apostles, as later nations were; but instead of being visited by Apostles, they go in search of Him, Who had not yet called Apostles: they are not gone to, but they themselves go to acquire faith in the presence of the future Master of Apostles. They use the means which are at their disposal: they adopt the resources which they can command. They do not allow science or riches to serve as antagonists or impediments to duties of Religion; but they say: We have seen His Star, and we have come with our gifts to adore Him.

Grace comes from God; but in order to produce its effect, it requires coöperation on the part of him to whom it is given. Their correspondence was *quick*. Obedience without delay is its first feature. They do not demur, until some evidence more striking and more convincing may present itself; but at once they prepare to follow. If they had delayed, how fatal might their hesitation have been! perhaps the Star would have disappeared, and they would never have known whither to proceed, or Who was calling them. Their correspondence was *active*. They went themselves; and though rich, as we judge from the nature of their gifts, they did not send others to inquire for them, but accepted the labour in their own persons. Others may have seen the Star too, but may have feared the dangers or uncertainties contingent upon following it; but they are in earnest, and at once *come to adore Him*. Their correspondence was *persevering;* and perseverance is always a sign of earnestness. We can well imagine how many difficulties may have presented themselves, even before they could have gone beyond their preparation, and have started upon their journey. Friends might have come forward and told them, that they were imprudent in following a phantom, which might lead them into difficulties from which there would be no escape. The habits of Eastern indolence and luxury might press upon them, and suggest the less trying course of remaining quietly where they were. Love of home, with all its associations, might arise and strive to dissuade them from breaking away from ties so natural and so dear. But nothing is of avail. They are determined, and they will not be dissuaded. *We have seen His Star:*

this is enough, and we must at once go with our gifts and adore Him.

Can we not easily find a parallel in our own case, when Nature and Grace struggle within us for the mastery? We know what we ought to do; for the light and voice of conscience tell us our duty. But we count the cost of obedience; and perhaps too often and too easily we hesitate, we delay, we fear to make a sacrifice, and we do not coöperate. How unlike is such timid irresoluteness to the quick, active, and persevering obedience of the Pilgrims of the Epiphany!

II. They are prepared, and we see them started on their journey. Grace has moved them; and now it does its second work, it helps them in their progress. Friends, riches, home, all natural obstacles are unavailing to retard them, and the journey is commenced. Seeing and admiring the Star is not enough for them: they notice it moving towards the West; and bearing their gifts, they are now following its guidance. Just let me ask you, my dear brethren, whether you do not find cause to blame yourselves sometimes, for limiting yourselves, when it pleases God to excite a good feeling within you, merely to admire and feel satisfaction in the thought, and then go no further in carrying out some practical resolution consequent upon it? Perhaps, on a glorious Festival of the Church, when you cannot help being warmed by her enthusiasm, you feel stirred to greater devotion; and a suggestion arises within you, that you ought really to be doing something more in the service of a God, to Whom the Church is always ministering with such fervent love. But there it ends: the impression passes away, the thought perishes, and after the Festival you are as tepid and as inactive as before. Now, what has that thought availed you? It was good, because it came from God; for without Him you cannot even think of, or *say, the Lord Jesus*.[1] But if it has not led to some amendment, or to some increase of practical devotion, through want of your zealously following up its suggestion, it will add nothing whatever to your spiritual good. Just as a thought of evil not consented to, but rejected, is not sin, so a thought of good, passed away and not accepted, is not virtue.

Now let us go on in company with the Wise men, and share in their labours and trials; for a great trial befals them, by which their sincerity and earnestness may well have been sorely tested. They have progressed in their journey, and have reached Jerusalem; but here, it seems to follow from the narrative, the Star, which had guided them so far, disappeared for a time, and left them

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 3.

uncertain how to proceed. May not the thought have started up in their minds, that what their friends had cautioned them against, was likely to turn out true: that they were only following a phantom which would lead them into difficulties and dangers? But they are too full of faith to encourage such an idea; and although for a time one resource fails them, just like earnest men, they recur to another. They find themselves in Jerusalem; and this they know to be the capital city of the nation, whose King they had come to adore. Straight to the palace they betake themselves; for such they might well argue was the fitting birthplace for the King of the Jews. It is, indeed, with their visit to this city, that the Evangelist commences his history of the Epiphany. They came, *saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews?*

This disappearance of the Star, and the consequent necessity of making the inquiry as to the place where Christ should be born, had these advantages. To the Wise men it brought a confirmation of their faith, from the testimony of the Prophets which was quoted to them. To the newly-born Infant it had the effect of publishing the fact of His Birth, in the city of Jerusalem. And to the Jews it was an occasion for awakening inquiry; and it must have served as a rebuke to their apathy, when they found strangers coming from a distance to seek a Salvation which had risen up at their own doors, though they heeded it not. They might with good reason, when they thought of all their opportunities, the Scribes particularly, with all their learning, have said what St. Augustine had occasion to say when thinking of the days in which he set such great store by learning: Surgunt indocti et rapiunt cœlum, &c.; 'The unlearned rise up and carry away the reward of heaven, and we with all our learning are plunged into hell.'

They have asked their question: *Where is He that is born King of the Jews?* and they receive an answer which confirms them in their conviction, and thus an additional help is given to them. Many of you, who are taking part in the Solemnity of this day, and are studying its lessons, are perhaps converts to the faith. It is a day of great comfort and encouragement to you; for the Epiphany is the Feast of Converts. It is a day which reminds us of God's dealings with souls who ought to minister to His glory; and how it is that when He finds some unfaithful, He supplies others to take their place. Every conversion to the Church is an act of restitution and of compensation for the unfaithfulness of older Catholics. These lose their power, give up prayer, neglect the Sacraments; and so Almighty God calls others to take their place. But cannot you, happy converts, remember the time when

all these trials of the Magi were your own? Do you not remember that first movement, which came upon you like the light of a star to call you away from the place of error into the home of truth? How you then thought over in much anxiety the step you felt called upon to take? How you prayed: Emitte lucem Tuam et veritatem Tuam: Send forth Thy Light and Thy Truth? How friends tried to dissuade you? How the world scoffed at you, and charged you with being visionary and capricious? And how, even when you had entered fairly on your career of conversion, when you were catechumens, the trials and difficulties sometimes increased, so as almost to overwhelm you? But you were determined, and God blessed you. You prayed for Light and Truth, and you entered at last, as you can always enter now, into the continued exclamation of the Psalmist: *Send forth Thy Light and Thy Truth: they have conducted me, and have brought me unto Thy holy mountain and into Thy Tabernacles.*[2]

III. So were the Wise men rewarded also; and it is their reward especially which we are commemorating in the joy of this great Solemnity. Grace moved them: it helped them, and it secured their success. They have been strengthened in their conviction, that the Star was sent from God to call them to adore One who claimed their adoration, and to whom they were ready to offer most gladly the gifts which they had prepared to present to Him. The Star once more appears to them, and with the sight of it their reward begins: *and seeing the Star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.* The journey from Jerusalem to Bethlehem was very short,[3] and almost immediately they see the Star motionless over a spot, very different from the palace which they had left in Jerusalem: it is a poor ruined out-house. They enter in; and what do they see? not one who is manifesting His wisdom by high lessons of perfection, or displaying His power by miracles, as the Jews were one day to see Him. But they see what the Catholic Church always sees, and what she is condemned by her enemies for seeing and acknowledging: *entering into the house, they see the Child, with Mary His Mother.* Reposing in His Mother's lap it is that *they adore Him, falling down,* and offer their treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 'Christ could not be born without her, because she was His Mother,' says St. John Chrysostom, 'nor found without her, because she was His minister; nor would He afterwards be crucified without her, because she was to be His companion in suffering.' In spite of all human improbability, they fall down in adoration. They see His

[2] Ps. xlii. *Judica me, Deus.*

[3] 'From Jerusalem to Bethlehem was a two hours' journey.' A Lapide.

Humanity, but they adore His hidden Divinity; they see the Son of Mary, but they adore the Son of God. It is the same Person in the two natures; and they profess their faith in the Mystery of the Incarnation: the same Person is to them God as well as Man: the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary.

How fully must they at that moment of adoration, have felt rewarded for all the labours and hardships of their journey! To see the Divine Child, and His Mother, and the venerable Patriarch Joseph! Jesus, Mary, Joseph! To witness the Mother accepting gratefully in the name of her Child the offerings which they had brought: their gold, frankincense, and myrrh, their threefold tribute to Him as King, as God, and as Man! What Saints have aspired after as the highest possible recompense, to see Jesus face to face: such is their reward at this happy moment! Not improbably may they have seen Angels adoring around: perhaps again those blessed Spirits, who had sung for the shepherds, sang the Gloria for these devout visitors. Not improbably also may our dear Lord, whose way it is always to sweeten every sacrifice made in His cause, have given them striking and visible proofs of His Divinity, and have been transfigured before them, as once before other three upon Thabor.[4] Delights with which you may have sometimes felt yourselves visited, in your acts of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, and in Holy Communion, may have come upon them in an intense degree in those privileged moments; and they would have felt inspired to go back and preach, as tradition tells us they did, in their own country, the Name and Love of Jesus.

O, my dear brethren, do you not feel moved by the generous conduct of these noble Pilgrims? And do you not feel that the Church has done well, in instituting a solemnity in honour of such an event? But simply to approve and admire, is what the example of the Wise men cautions you against. They did something more in proof of their sincerity, and so must you. There are two classes amongst you whom this Festival instructs. You that have always been Catholics: who in your infancy were baptised as members of the Holy Catholic Church, and have never known what it is to be severed from her membership: see whether you have lived up to your privileges, or whether you may not in some degree have grown tepid, disloyal, and ungenerous. We do sometimes feel shamed into greater fervour, by seeing how converts love what they have come to know so late, whilst we have known so long what we love so little. Even those that are still out of the Church, groping in the dark with a very uncertain star

[4] *Jesus Son of Mary*, by Rev. J. B. Morris, vol. i. p. 422.

to guide them, they who have seen only the outside of the Church, and have been attracted to admire and to imitate what they have seen: even they, by the sacrifices which we know they make, and the enthusiasm which they manifest, in behalf of what is imaginary and sentimental, may serve as examples of a zeal and generosity too rare amongst us. Let the rejection of the Jews, the long privileged people of God, intimated in this Festival, be a caution and an exhortation to you.

And you who are converts, always now-a-days forming an integral portion of our little flocks, do you not feel a special sympathy with the Magi, and find this solemnity to be in close harmony with your own sentiments? You have made sacrifices, and they may have cost you dearly. But for Whom and for what have you made them? After all, how little have you had to pay, for the much that has been given to you! Who would not give up all that he has, to be allowed to go to Bethlehem, to see Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and to be rewarded by a smile, a blessing, and a word! In the Blessed Sacrament, and in the Communion of Saints, you have found this reward. Make your act of thanksgiving, and pray for your perseverance! And as you go home from the sacred Presence in which you now are, you may take the canticle of Simeon as your own, and sing, as we can well imagine these good and holy Wise men sang, as they returned to their country: *Now, O Lord, dost Thou dismiss Thy servant in peace; for our eyes have seen Thy Salvation.*

SERMON XI.

SUNDAY WITHIN OCTAVE OF EPIPHANY.

LESSONS OF OUR LORD'S BOYHOOD.

Did you not know that I must be about My Father's work?

PERHAPS it may not have oftentimes occurred to you, to dwell upon the interesting period of the Life of our dear Lord, which intervened between His Infancy and His Mission: especially the time of His Boyhood. His Infancy is familiar to you, in consequence of its details being constantly brought before you during the beautiful Christmas solemnities. The facts of His missionary life are known to you, and its lessons impressed upon you, through the various Gospels on the Sundays throughout the year, in which the miracles and parables especially are appointed for your instruction. The greater events of His Life are commemorated in the Festivals which year after year are celebrated, renewing each time their impression, and thus treasuring themselves up more securely in your memory. Every detail of the Sacred Passion is at one time or another submitted to you for meditation or pious instruction, and not an act of those eventful hours can possibly have escaped you. But of the long interval between the Infancy and the active life of Him, Who went through every period in order to sanctify each, you may not have oftentimes thought; and the lessons of that time may therefore not have been studied or applied in the same manner as the lessons connected with events more fully recorded in the Gospel history.

But now that we are passing on from the Christmas Festivals, and shall very soon be considering the later events of our Lord's life, it will be well to follow the suggestion of this day's Gospel, and turn our thoughts for a few moments, not upon the hidden life in general, but upon that special period of it, which formed His Boyhood. Our dear Lord became truly Man, and went through the different stages of human life, from infancy to the fulness of manhood. He did not come into this world formed in that fulness all at once, as Adam came forth from his Creator's

hand, but He came *made of a woman*.[1] He was born of a Mother, was nursed at her breasts, was watched over in His Childhood, was subject to His parents as a Boy, and in the years which preceded His active missionary career, prepared Himself, not indeed by human learning, but yet prepared Himself, for the labours which were to attend Him in the future. He was a Boy before He became a Man. *He advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace before God and men;* and of the whole period of His Boyhood, as well as of that one event of it recorded in to-day's Gospel, that was true what He then said, that He was engaged about His Father's work.

The lessons of His Boyhood we will learn from two sources: first, from what is written; and secondly, from what is not written.

I. The incident narrated in the Gospel of to-day, is the only event of the Boyhood of our Blessed Lord which has been recorded for us. Like every other fact which has been written for our instruction in the Gospel history, it is full of matter for meditation, and gives us much to apply for our own conduct. The Mystery of the Incarnation is affirmed in it, for we have brought before us in the One Person, the presence of the two Natures. We see the Humanity in the fact of His obedience to His parents, going under their guidance and care, and being led by them to pay in the Temple of Jerusalem, the tribute of adoration and outward service which as Man He owed to His Father. Already one of His first acts of obedience had been performed in that Temple. Thither had He been taken, forty days after His Birth, to be presented in accordance with the law of His Father, and then He had done His Father's work. Later in life He was to be doing His Father's work, in defending the respect due to that House of God, by driving out of it those who were profaning it by their buying and selling within its holy walls. And now in His Boyhood, He is manifesting His Humanity by adoring within that Temple the Divinity to Whom it had been dedicated. And He manifests His Divine Nature by the wisdom more than human, which enabled Him to catechise the Doctors, sitting in the midst of them whilst they stood around, and *were astonished at His wisdom and His answers*.

Here, as a Boy, He is showing the future Man. He is giving evidence of that zeal for souls, which was to characterise His missionary Life. He illuminates the minds of the Doctors: He is giving them a Grace: He is prompting them to do what was suggested perhaps to some of the very ones who were then hearing them, on the occasion of the visit to Jerusalem and the ques-

[1] Gal. iv. 4.

tions of the Pilgrims of the Epiphany, to look into the Law and the Prophets, which they professed to know and to interpret, and to ascertain whether there was not at that moment One in the midst of them, Whom they ought to know and to accept as the long-promised Messias. This was His Father's work in which He is now engaged, prematurely, as it might appear to others, but yet with a power fully equal to the task, because within Him was residing *all the fulness of the Godhead corporally*.[2]

To those that are young, He was at that time setting an example of a love for the Temple of God, and for the place where His Glory dwelleth. Holy as was that Temple, whose privilege and praises Prophets had sung, because it was to witness, what the older Temple had not been destined to see, the presence within it of the Word made Flesh, yet He, Who thus sanctified that House, was intending a more lasting and a greater blessing for the future Temples of the New Law, which were to be hallowed by a more holy worship, and by the constant presence of Himself in His Sacrament of Love. What the Psalmist had said, He wished to be said and to be felt by the young whom He was then teaching by His example: *I will enter to the Altar of God, to that God who maketh glad my youth*.[3]

And a duty of prompt obedience to parents is practised and taught in this event of the Boyhood of our Lord. To His parents this had been an occasion of anxiety and sorrow, and afterwards of very great joy. It is numbered amongst the Seven Dolours of our Lady, and it is placed amongst the joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. To Mary and Joseph, His staying back from them was a mystery which they could not solve. They knew His love for them, but they knew His still greater love for His Father in heaven; and when they asked Him why He had left them in such a state of sorrow, they accepted with perfect resignation His answer, that it was His Father's work, which had higher claims upon Him, that had detained Him, and kept Him engaged in the Temple of Jerusalem. But yet, on a word of authority, He immediately breaks off from His labours amongst the Doctors, and practises the virtue incumbent upon His age, and goes with them back to the quiet Home of Nazareth. Much as there is that is mysterious in this incident, one point is manifest. It is mysterious why and how He should have been separated from His parents for three whole days: it is mysterious why He should break in upon the secrecy of the Hidden Life, by such an act as that which He was performing when His parents discovered Him: it is mysterious that even His Mother, who had treasured up all

[2] Col. ii. 9. [3] Ps. Judica me, Deus.

His words in her heart, could not understand the word which He then spoke to herself and St. Joseph. But one act is clear and without any mysteriousness: and that is, His quick compliance with His Mother's will, in at once leaving the Temple, and going down to Nazareth, and being subject there to the authority of His parents.

How great must have been her influence over Him, when at her bidding He gives up so holy a work as that of labouring for souls, and defers it even for eighteen years! He does not ask them to come and live in Jerusalem, and allow Him to continue a work for which He had so strong an attraction. He had a lesson of submission and obedience to teach, and that was better than any other work: it was also the work of His Father, for it was His command to give honour to father and mother. To what a change does He submit? Nazareth instead of Jerusalem! The workshop instead of the Temple! Poor peasant companions instead of the Doctors! Joseph the carpenter in place of the Eternal Father! It is the clearness of this obedience, in the midst of the mystery which surrounds it, which makes the lesson the more striking and persuasive.

Here, then, is what the Boy Jesus teaches in the one written incident recorded of Him. Showing Himself in it to be God as well as Man, He inculcates love for the Temple of God, zeal for souls, as if it were a sign of His future vocation, and quick entire obedience to His parents. Let the young imitate Him, especially in this spirit of submission to authority. It cannot be considered unworthy for them to do what He considered worthy of Himself.

II. But I have said that another source of instruction afforded by His Boyhood is to be found in what is not written. What does this mean, my dear brethren? Is it not apparently paradoxical that we should gather lessons from that which has not been written for our instruction? And yet, have you not heard it sometimes said, that there are occasions in which silence is more eloquent and impressive than any words? And such is the silence which shrouds the rest of the history of the Boyhood. It is an active silence: it is a silence which suggests lessons which words would seem to contradict. The most comprehensive words in the whole Gospel history are those which tell us: *He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them.* They comprise the whole history of eighteen years. They cover all the rest of the early years of that sacred Life, every moment of which was so full of value, and every act of which was contributing such glory to heaven. For many reasons it has been most fitting

that those acts should not have been recorded, and therefore I have said that words would seem to contradict what silence so strikingly conveys to us.

It is most fitting that the acts should not be written, from the very fact that they are not written. The Spirit, who breatheth where He wills, has inspired the silence which extends over this period. If it had been better that these acts should have been recorded, they would have been inserted into the written history of the Gospel; but if the silence has been inspired, then it has been so for our instruction. And that there is a purpose in the silence, follows from the last words of the verse which tells us of these eighteen years: *and His Mother kept all these words in her heart.* It is one of the instances in which St. Luke, the evangelist of the sacred Infancy, who tells us that what he wrote down he had ascertained diligently from eye-witnesses, seems to have inquired about the events of the Hidden Life. The history of the loss and the finding of the Child was recounted to him by the only surviving eye-witness, the Mother who had searched for Him, had found Him, had questioned Him, and had been answered by Him. He was then told all else that was to be revealed: the return of the Child to Nazareth, and His subjection to His parents. But not another word was told him; and so he writes down the silence and the treasuring-up in that Mother's heart of what was meant to be kept to herself, and not to be communicated to others.

But what was done during the rest of the Boyhood and the earlier years of this life? The silence tells us that humility was practised: a life of retirement was led. But humility and retirement are not to be spoken about. They are among the virtues of the young, and they are a caution and a protest against faults always to be deprecated at that age. Is it a fault peculiar to our own days, or has it always existed, that young persons try to put themselves forward before their time? that they become impatient of subjection? and that they aim at independence, before they have had the time and opportunity to be formed for their position and duties in the busy public world? Obedience and subjection ought to be recognised as instincts of Christianity; and they who wish to cultivate this character, ought above all things to form it within themselves in the days of youth. Unless the virtues of the youth are found in their own season, those of the man will not be found in the days of manhood. Silence is the record of humility; and hence it is that the period of our dear Lord's Boyhood is so secretly recorded.

What room is there not for the mind to imagine the realities of the holy Home of Nazareth, and to study the virtues which

were there practised! This has always been a fertile source of most devout and practical thoughts and resolutions. Those who have been called to the privileged state of the Religious Life, have often pictured to themselves the perfection of that House, and have found in it the best model for their imitation. The humility, obedience, poverty, silence, self-sacrifice, regularity, purity of intention, and all other virtues and exercises of that state, practised in such constant perfection at Nazareth, have inspired many fervent souls with the desire of following more earnestly the course upon which they had entered. But not to them exclusively, and considering the position of the three members of the family in that Home, not to them so directly, are addressed the lessons of domestic life which are to be studied there. He, who was always engaged about His Father's work, was indeed actively employed about it in teaching, through the means of one Home, what ought to be the practice of every home.

You remember a saying of our dear Lord, which He once addressed to His disciples: *Let him that is the greater among you become as the younger, and he that is the leader as he that serveth. For which is greater: he that sitteth at the table, or he that serveth? . . I am in the midst of you as he that serveth.*[4] May He not at that time have thought of His own life at Nazareth, and of the acts which He there performed? Though the greatest of the three, for He was the Lord and God of the other two; yet, being subject to them, we can well imagine how this subjection was shown, affectionately and actively. In Joseph, as the Father of the Family, and Protector of the Incarnate Word, was vested the authority which humbly and watchfully he exercised as holding the place of God. In Mary, the Mother's duty found the most holy and loving fulfilment. And in the Child Jesus, respectful obedience to His Father, affectionate submission to His Mother, an active correspondence with every wish of each, and a cheerful contribution of His own labour towards the maintenance of that simple Home, were duties gladly accepted and faithfully complied with. Thus does the Boyhood give occasion to every state, to find something to study, to admire, and to practise. Parents! what are your children, and what do you try to make them? What are your homes, and how do you strive to conduct and to form them? Do you see in them any resemblance to the Home of Nazareth? Or if you find but a sad and painful contrast to the obedience of the Boy Jesus in your own children, may it not be, because the contrast is equally sad and painful between yourselves and the Parents of Nazareth? And, children! what

[4] Luke xxii. 27.

can you think when you place by your own side the example of the Boy Jesus? Think of your resemblance to Him. You are a child as He was: you have parents whom it is your duty to honour, obey, love, and attend to, as He did in all their wants. You have companions, as He had, possibly in the persons of St. John the Baptist, and others whom He afterwards numbered amongst His disciples: how do you try to influence them, or how do you allow yourselves to be influenced by them? Does it not make you shudder at the idea of sin, when you think how like you ought to be to Him, Who became a Child and a Boy to teach and to caution you?

If, my dear brethren, all the details of the Boyhood of our dear Lord, instead of being shrouded in silence, had been recorded and brought before us in the written Gospel history, do you not feel that there would have been some incongruity in that fact? It would seem to be against what we most admire in the age of youth—a spirit of retiredness, and a shrinking from prominence. How truly is worldly pride and ambition rebuked by the secrecy of the life at Nazareth! A love of display, a seeking after notice, an anxiety to be preferred before others: how often do these feelings manifest themselves now-a-days by those who, both out of time and out of place, put themselves forward to gain the esteem and admiration of others! So false has the ordinary standard of judgment now become, through a courting for notice and a love of appearance, that the soundest way to pronounce as to what a person really is, is to place him at least two or three stages below what he appears to be. The young place themselves above their age: the poor emulate in outward show those that are in higher ranks: servants can scarcely be distinguished from those that employ them: and how opposed is all this to what the silence of the Boyhood so impressively suggests!

Surely, my dear brethren, we may all desire to place ourselves amongst the Doctors in the Temple, and listen to the questions put to us by the Child Jesus, whilst in our regard He will be doing His Father's work. And more than that, we will follow Him to His Home at Nazareth, and allow Him to pursue His instruction there. Much as we shall be learning from His later life, from His preaching, His parables, and His miracles: much as we shall be moved to a return of love, and a study of His humility and obedience, whilst we go in slow and full detail through every act of His Passion, we shall not fail, in harmony with this holy season, to dwell upon the Hidden Life, and especially upon the lessons suggested by these early years of the Boyhood. His first recorded word tells us of His eagerness about His Father's work. He

spoke that as a Boy, and He spoke it for our good. May He, in the case of each of us, parents, children, and all, ever go on doing that work, and may He bring it to its perfection! And among the graces and blessings of the year upon which we have now entered, may we be able, for the good of our souls, to reckon those which we have gathered in the Temple, or in the Home of Nazareth, whilst we have been seated amongst those who have been taught by the words, and guided by the actions, of the Boy Jesus!

SERMON XII.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS.

There is no other Name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.
Acts iv. 12.

THE noble and spirited address of the Prince of the Apostles, brought so appropriately before us by the Church on this Festival of the Most Holy Name of JESUS, was delivered on an occasion which both friends and enemies of the Christian cause regarded as one of the public acts of the inauguration of a new system, and the declaration of the Name under which that system was to be established. A challenge is given and is accepted: an open authoritative question is asked, and an open and authoritative answer is received. Two of the Apostles, Peter and John, are entering the Temple at one of the hours of public prayer. It is three o'clock in the afternoon; and there is an anxious and excited crowd standing about, partly prejudiced, and partly well-disposed towards the new claimants to spiritual authority. For the Day of Pentecost had not long passed by, and already thousands of converts had been gained to the faith. Many, we may imagine, were going into and out of the Temple, looking with wondering curiosity at the veil, which a few weeks before, on that Good Friday, had been so mysteriously rent in twain, and was still hanging as an evidence that former things had passed away, and that all things had been made new.

The Apostles are watched as they move about: they are *made a spectacle unto men.* Some of the crowd, influenced by the Scribes and Pharisees, are trying to find evidence against them of subverting the people, or of refusing to pay tribute to Cæsar. Others, astonished at the strange events which had occurred, and were still occurring, wondering how men, whom they had known a few days before to be hiding themselves in a state of panic, could be now going fearlessly about, not courting, but at the same time not fearing, opposition, begin to think that the hand of God

must be with them, and are beginning to be drawn into sympathy with their cause. And now, before the eyes of many of them, a wonderful event occurs. A poor crippled man is lying helpless at the gate, through which the Apostles are passing. He tries to excite their commiseration, by pointing to his infirmities, and asks for alms. Just as on the occasion of which we read in the Gospel, when a poor palsied man asked for one blessing and received another, so is it now. Peter and John fix their eyes upon him, and bid him look upon them. Then Peter said: *Silver and gold I have not; but what I have I give thee: In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise, and walk.* Instantly the poor man leaps up, perfectly healed, and enters into the Temple to praise and thank God for the blessing vouchsafed to him. Great excitement follows; and as all the people crowd round the Apostles, Peter avails himself of the opportunity, to preach the Divinity and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; but the authorities interfere. The two Apostles are apprehended and imprisoned, and next morning are brought up before the high-priests and others, and are asked the definite question: *By what power, or by what Name have you done this?* It was this question that gave occasion to the noble answer which Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, gave to the question, and which we have read in the Lesson of to-day.

On the Festival which we are celebrating to-day, in honour of the most holy Name of JESUS, it is well for us to turn, as the Church wishes, to the first glories of the Church associated with that Name, and to see how that Name, throughout the whole of her course, is everything to her. And besides this, it will be well to see what this Name is doing for each individual member of the Church, and what we therefore owe, each of us, to the holy Name of JESUS. Our text is true of the Church in general: it is true of each of us: *there is no other Name under heaven, given to men, whereby we must be saved.*

I. You can picture to yourselves, my dear brethren, what must have been the feelings of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, when he was called upon by the princes, and the ancients, and the high priests, and others, who were sitting in judgment, to give an account of his conduct in healing the poor man at the Temple gate. Could there have been the least element of fear in his heart, when he knew in whose Name he had performed the miracle? *Our help is in the Name of the Lord*, may well have been the expression in which his feelings would have found utterance, whilst he was passing the night in prison, and was preparing to meet his judges. What could they do against God? for God, in that miracle, had made him as His instrument. He was, therefore,

ready and determined to reassert openly in the face of the council, what he had just before his apprehension declared to the crowd he had been addressing, that it was in the Name of JESUS of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, but whom God had raised again from the dead, that that man stood whole before them ; and that this miracle was intended as a proof of the glory and power of that Name, and that there was no other Name but that which could bring salvation to mankind.

The Council before which the two Apostles were arraigned was the great Council of the Sanhedrim, consisting of the chief-priests, the elders, and the Scribes. Annas and Caiphas are especially mentioned as being of the number : the same two who had acted so prominent a part not long before in the trial and condemnation of Him, whose Name was to-day to be thrust before them in such noble defiance by that same Apostle, who had on that previous occasion shrunk so timidly from professing his knowledge of that Name. The challenge is now given, and is accepted. *By what power and by what Name have you done this?* is the question which they are called upon to answer ; and nobly it is answered. Not only does the Prince of the Apostles, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, declare by what power and under what Name he had then acted ; but he goes beyond the immediate point then at issue, and makes the announcement, as Head of the Church, of what the policy of the Church is ever to be : *There is no other Name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.* Then succeeded that timid compromise proposed by the judges. They had not hesitated at the time of the Passion to hand our dear Lord over to Pilate, that He might be condemned to death. But finding now that His Death had brought Victory, as manifested in the Resurrection, and that followers once timid were now resolute in His cause, they try another scheme. They want to entice the Apostles into silence, and try to induce them to promise to teach no longer in the Name of JESUS. But the answer which the successors of St. Peter have so often had occasion to give, when the world has tried to make them give up the sacred trust reposed in them, was then outspoken : *Non possumus : We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*

The noble answer of St. Peter is that which the Church always falls back upon, and has ready at hand, when she stands arraigned at the bar of the world, or explains, for the encouragement of her children, what are the principles which guide her in her conduct and policy. When asked in what Name and by what power she has contrived to convert nations to the faith, she points to no other Name but to that of JESUS. What is it that

she saw before her, when she entered upon the course assigned to her by her holy Founder? She saw mankind wounded, and paralysed, and bound down under the chains of sin, and yet anxious for some helping hand to give comfort in its distress. She looks down upon that suffering object: she knows that she has a healing power invested in her, a remedy which she can apply, in the Precious Blood shed upon Calvary. She has to announce to the nations, that Salvation is within their reach; that their God has reigned amongst them, and has brought to them peace and redemption: that JESUS is the Name of Him who has purchased them for Himself, and whom she has to preach, and that *there is no other Name given to men* whereby they can be saved. *In the Name of* JESUS *Christ of Nazareth,* she says to them, *arise, and walk:* and thus she gains them to her fold.

And in the constant labours which are assigned to her, and the struggles she is ever making in her conflict with the world, she has this same glorious Name written on the standard under which she is fighting, and under its invocation she goes fearlessly forward. The great Mystery of Faith which she has to communicate to the world, is all expressed in that one Name. JESUS means one that is Saviour. It means, therefore, one that can redeem and has redeemed. It implies the union of the two natures in the One Person, who alone could bring Redemption to His people, and who did bring it. To show the efficacy of that Name, she points to Bethlehem and to Calvary; and she shows how the public promulgation of the Name made at the latter place, manifested the fitness of its being assigned at the former. For at the Circumcision the Name JESUS was heard only by a few; but when the glory of the Name had been fully earned, by the humility and obedience even unto the death of the Cross, manifested at the Crucifixion, the Name was displayed by the highest human authority for the information of all who might ask, under what Name was He condemned to die; for it was by Pontius Pilate, the public representative of the world in Jerusalem, that the title was affixed to the head of the Cross: JESUS *of Nazareth, King of the Jews.* And in three different languages the title is written, in order that all nations may know the Name of their Redeemer. Thus is this holy Name the expression of the Faith of the Church.

And it is also the expression of her hope and love. The Church in the midst of all her anxieties and labours never forgets the word once said to her: *Ask in My Name,* and the promise attached to that command, that whatever was so asked should undoubtedly be granted. How, then, can she help being cheered

on and filled with hope! Her help is in the Name of her Lord, and it never fails her. It is true that she has trials and sufferings; but what results from them? Not her defeat, but her victory. The Cross is upon her; but she looks up to it, and upon its head she sees the Name JESUS, and she bears it cheerfully, and goes forward full of confidence. And not of confidence only, but full of love also. With Christ she is nailed to the Cross. It is well for her to be there, for the Name of JESUS, which she sees upon it, makes her cling to it; and with the devotedness of one who defied anything to separate him from that love, she also goes on in her career, and subdues all nations, all peoples, and all hearts to herself. And thus this holy Name is ever doing its work in the teaching, the struggles, and the conquests of the Church.

II. And now, my dear brethren, let me bring home the efficacy of this holy Name more closely to yourselves individually. You are members and children of the Church, and in marking you as her own, she stamps upon you the sign of the Living God, and applies to you the merits associated with the Person and Name of JESUS. It is important for you at all times to remember your own individuality, and how Almighty God has dealt and ever is dealing immediately with you. God has created each one of you, and to each one He has given His own Son as a Redeemer. One by one you have been brought to the Font of Baptism, and as in that saving stream your sin was washed away, you were made pure, spotless, and innocent, a child of the Church, and an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven by virtue of the power of the Name of Him, who instituted that Sacrament, and who gave it its efficacy. The strength which was given to you in Confirmation was infused by that Holy Spirit, whom JESUS had a right to send upon His Church; and individually upon yourself, it has been given through that Name. For when our dear Lord was promising the Holy Spirit as another Comforter, He spoke of Him as *the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name*.[1] It is, then, in the Name of JESUS that He has been sent upon the Church, and has descended sacramentally upon you.

But especially in the two Sacraments, which you are exhorted to receive frequently, in order that you may preserve and increase the Grace of God in your soul, Penance, the Sacrament of Mercy, and the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Love: in these two the Name of JESUS again and again has shown its wonderful efficacy in your regard. When you may have had

[1] John xiv. 26.

the misfortune of falling into sin, and of losing the Grace given through that Name, what have you done in order to recover it? You have moved yourself to sorrow: you have thought over your acts in the bitterness of your soul; and if you have doubted, like unhappy Cain, whether your sin was too great to deserve pardon, you have thought of the meaning of the Name of JESUS, of the power of that Name, that there is no other Name under which you can be saved, and can gain pardon. You have thrown yourself on your knees, as Magdalene once did, and have seen the Image above you of the Crucified One. Over His Head you have read the Name which is written, and you have said to Him with confidence: Be to me a JESUS. Then you have felt an assurance of pardon: you have obeyed the voice you have heard from Him: Go, show yourself to the Priest. There upon your knees, again at the foot of the Crucifix, you have declared your sin, you have looked upon Him whom by your sins you had pierced, you have called Him by His Name and besought His Mercy; and then, like the poor crippled man, you have been ordered *in the Name of* JESUS to *arise and walk:* you have felt yourself healed, and once more restored to the friendship of your God.

And in the Sacrament of Love, His own Sacrament by excellence, in which He gives Himself to you to be the food of your soul, that you may eat Him and may live by Him, what has not His Name done in order to prepare you, and to warm you into a fitting state of love? You have thought of your unworthiness, and have almost shrunk from approaching to so holy a Mystery. Overwhelmed, like St. Peter, by the sense of His Presence, you have been inclined to say: *Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful creature.*[2] And you have exclaimed: *What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou shouldst visit him?*[3] But one power has drawn you to Him, and will not allow you to remain at a distance. It is the power of His Name. Boldly you have said: *I will take the cup of Salvation,* for it is the Precious Blood of your Saviour you are invited to receive, *and I will call upon the Name of the Lord.* Then you come and drink in joy from the Saviour's fountains, the fountain of Him whose Name is JESUS, or Saviour. *He that thirsteth, let him come!* has been His invitation. *Come, Lord* JESUS! has been your answer. Then you have been united heart with heart: you have held Him whom your soul loveth. And defying any other power to overcome that which has influenced you, and to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, you

[2] Luke v. 8. [3] Ps. viii.

have gone away, wonderfully comforted and greatly enriched. In your preparation for Holy Communion, my dear brethren, in your aspirations before and after, try the efficacy of the Name of JESUS. Repeat it again and again ; and then say whether it is not a sure receipt for increasing love.

There are two duties to this holy Name which I urge upon you in the name of the Church, and to these two I limit you, for they include everything : Respect and Invocation. You owe respect to that holy Name, for it always bears with it its own subduing power. In heaven, on earth, and under the earth, it is heard, and every creature is bowed down in adoration. When in the Old Law, in the midst of all the majesty of Sinai, Almighty God protected the honour of His Name by the commandment : Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain, did He not intend to include the Name of JESUS? Whose Name is it? Is it not the Name of the Lord thy God? If, then, that commandment was originally so strictly observed, that the children of Israel, for fear of taking it in vain, are said to have shrunk from mentioning it, and to have called the Name of God, the Ineffable Name ;[4] at least we, to whom such a prohibition is not extended in this superstitious interpretation, ought to shrink from ever using that holy Name lightly, or without bowing the head in token of our veneration.

But so far from not using the holy Name, I have told you that invocation is one of the duties which you owe to it. *There is no other Name given to you, whereby you must be saved ;* and as you must be saved, take the Name, love it, always keep it in your heart, and frequently have it upon your tongue. Let the holy Name of JESUS be everything to you ! Let every act that you perform derive its value from being performed in union with this Name ! Let every prayer that you offer up to the Throne of God, find its force and gain its end, because it is offered up through this Name ! Let every trial and suffering, which comes upon you in this vale of tears, be sweetened because the Name of JESUS is invoked as it falls upon you ! Let every temptation be conquered, because this Name brings victory ! Let every enemy be humbled, and every obstacle in the way of your perseverance be surmounted, because the Name of JESUS gives you strength, and secures your success ! And be not merely negative, but go on in the way of your perfection : add virtue to virtue, and grace to grace, until your constant and fervent invocation of this holy Name, having humbled your enemies, brings you your reward ; and your faith and hope are at last crowned by the sight

[4] Bergier, Dict. de Théol. v. Jehovah.

and possession of Him who bore that Name, and the *God of gods is seen in Sion*.[5]

My dear brethren, is it so hard to be saved, when such an easy and efficacious means is placed at our disposal? We are not fighting alone: we are not fighting for ourselves, or our own cause. We are fighting under Him, with Him, and for the cause of Him, who bore the Name of JESUS. What courage and confidence are inspired into us, when in our night prayers we use that cry of a devoted and earnest soul, which we make our own, in the inspiriting psalm of Complin, the *Qui habitat*.[6] Who can falter when he uses the concluding words of that song of victory? It is God Himself who speaks: and what does He say? *Because he hath hoped in Me, I will deliver him: I will protect him because he hath known My Name. He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him: I am with him in tribulation: I will deliver him, and I will glorify him. I will fill him with length of days, and I will show him My Salvation.* Know, therefore, and love the holy Name of JESUS. Invoke it constantly in life, in health, in sickness, and in death. He that bore the Name, and did for you the work which the Name implies, will be a JESUS, a Saviour, to you. He will pardon your past sins, secure you against future ones. He will protect you in life; and at death will give you the crowning Grace which He purchased for you, when for the sake of each of us He took upon Himself the holy Name of JESUS.

[5] Ps. lxxxiii. [6] Ib. xc.

SERMON XIII.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

MASTER AND SERVANT.

I say to my servant: Do this; and he doth it.

It would seem from the words of the Centurion in this day's Gospel, in which he gives the character of his servant, that he had a better servant than masters can always find now-a-days. And it would also seem, from the actions of the Centurion, that his servant had a better master than servants always meet with now-a-days. That the master should only have to say to his servant: Do this, and that it should be immediately done, implied upon the part of the servant a prompt and steady obedience, which always forms an important feature in the character of a good servant. And that, when the poor servant was ill, the master should have recourse to extraordinary means in order to procure his recovery, that he should come to our Blessed Lord in great anxiety, and pray for a miraculous cure, showed upon his part an interest and solicitude in behalf of the welfare of his servant, which enter so much into the character of a good master.

I will take occasion, then, to-day, from the words and the conduct of the Centurion, to suggest some lessons on the relationship between Master and Servant. This relationship implies very important and very extensive duties. There is scarcely any person whom, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, these duties do not affect. There is not a family in which responsibility upon this ground can possibly be ignored. And there is not, as experience testifies, a home, into the comfort or happiness of which the servant does not enter, either by contributing to it or by disturbing it.

I am not going this morning to speak upon one of these classes only, but upon both. I wish to speak upon the relative duties which result from the connexion between master and servant. There is a compact existing between two persons, and an

obligation of fidelity to that compact binding upon each of the parties concerned. Masters are not to rejoice, just because they may expect that something may be said which will come home to their servants; nor are servants to be glad, because they feel that it is very likely something will be suggested, which will be of advantage to their masters or mistresses. Let each attend to what concerns himself, and be glad because he may hear something for his own benefit. It certainly is an important subject, well deserving great attention. It is one of the chief complaints of the day, that it is so hard to find good servants. Many of you that have to manage servants, agree with the justness of this complaint, and are probably gratified at hearing it thus publicly stated. But, I must add, that we priests, who are oftentimes appealed to by poor servants, when they feel that they are treated unjustly, are obliged to say that good masters and mistresses are not always to be found, and that the fault is not as a matter of course, to be always laid upon the servant. Many of you, who are servants, are probably not sorry to hear this much said upon your side. I cannot pretend to go into very full details, but I will lay down principles which must be admitted in theory, and which those who are concerned must try to follow out in practice.

I. When Almighty God created man, and placed him in this world in order to perform certain duties which were to be demanded of him, He expressed what was a part of his nature, when He said of him: *It is not good for man to be alone.*[1] Although said immediately of the married state, and of the necessity of giving to Adam, in the person of Eve, a help like to himself, the words have a more extended meaning, and may well be considered to embrace all the relations which are implied by the social character of man. It is not well for us to be alone; for we mutually depend upon each other in so many regards, that only for the help we afford each other, our life would be shorn of much of its happiness, would lose many of its comforts, and find an increase of misery. In the family we have an institution designed and made by God: a collection of individuals forming one whole; several members, but one body or household: in which, therefore, a principle of unity must exist, which, if disturbed, destroys the perfection, and ultimately even the existence, of that which is intended to be one. We have a very sacred authority, which tells us what is the result of division, where the principle of unity is essential: *Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall*

[1] Gen. ii. 18.

fall.[2] In the Holy Family at Nazareth, where due subjection was lovingly observed, the perfection was never in the least degree marred; and thus our dear Lord became an example not to individuals only, but showed, through Himself and His parents, a model to every family.

Though in that happy Home, its poverty may have been a reason for dispensing with a servant—and indeed we can scarcely conceive that the privilege of ministering to each other could have been allowed to be encroached upon among the three holy members who formed that household—yet a family in its ordinary constitution, besides parents and children, implies the office and the presence of servant also. And all who are affected by this relationship, know how important it is that the nature of this relationship should be properly understood and considered. A servant, in order to gain an honest and respectable maintenance, requires employment, and therefore finds it necessary to have a master. Thus, a servant cannot do without a master. And a master, in order that the affairs of the household may be properly attended to, and the wants of parents and children be duly supplied, requires the help and ministry of a servant. And thus a master cannot do without a servant. Each implies the other, and each is necessary to the other. And experience is always teaching us, how the happiness of the family can be affected by the servant; and how it is consequently the interest of those who value that happiness, to consult everything that contributes to maintain it.

The mutual duties between master and servant result from the great law of fraternal charity; that law which tells us that we must love our neighbour as ourself. If you ask the question, which a certain inquirer once temptingly asked of our Lord: *Who is my neighbour?*[3] you will find in the answer that will be given, that a servant and master are neighbours, and are bound towards each other by the law of brotherly love. And the fourth commandment, which expresses one relationship in a family, implies all the others. The law: *Honour thy father and thy mother*, not only binds children towards parents, but parents also towards children, brothers and sisters towards each other, and masters and servants in their respective duties. It is the first of those commandments, which assert our duties towards each other, and it commences by affirming the duties which always exist in a family.

The relationship between master and servant implies also, it must be remembered, a contract; and the claims of justice must in the observance of that contract be sacredly observed. There

[2] Luke xi. 17. [3] Ibid. x. 29.

is a double compact existing: and each side is bound by it. The servant is bound to be just in his duties to his master; but the master is equally bound to be just in his duties to his servant. Not only does a servant violate his compact, if he neglect the service of his master; but the master violates his compact also, if he neglects what he ought to attend to in regard to his servant. These duties on both sides are binding in conscience, they are binding under sin, and it may be frequently under grievous sin. They imply, therefore, matters which ought to be examined into, when we question ourselves whether everything is as it ought to be between ourselves and our neighbour. They will certainly be examined into, when we appear in judgment before God; and as we hope that all will stand well with us upon that day, we must see that all is well with us even now.

With regard, then, to master and servant, both must remember that they are under a law which binds them as social beings: that there is one tribunal before which they are both amenable: that the great law of brotherly love and of justice binds each of them: that it is not only by human law and by the conveniences of society that the relationship exists between them, but that the great Creator who made man, male and female, made master and servant also; that with Him there is no exception of persons, but that He demands during life, and will demand after death, attention and an inquiry into the fulfilment of duties, which He has imposed, and which enter, therefore, as an integral part into the matter of present examination and of future judgment.

II. Now let us take each of these relative duties singly, and see what are the respective obligations. First, let us consider the duties of the Master; and let it be especially borne in mind that the Mistress is included under this name, as oftentimes the care of the servants, and, therefore, the responsibility upon this point, belongs to her department in the management of the household. Let the master, then, remember that he has obligations of two kinds towards his servant: temporal and spiritual.

His first temporal duty towards his servant is to treat him with kindness, both in word and in deed. His servant is not a slave, but a neighbour. He does not belong to a lower order of creation, but is, in everything essential, on a level with himself. The soul of his servant is as valuable as his own: made to the same image and likeness: endowed with the same faculties: created by the same God, and redeemed at the same Price. It will not require any great stretch of humility for him to admit that in the eyes of God and the Angels, his servant may stand higher than himself, and may one day, perhaps, be far above himself in

the Kingdom of Heaven. It really is important for him to master this truth: to admit it in practice, and therefore to follow it out in its legitimate consequences. Can any one deny this? If not, and if it is, and must be admitted, would not much harshness of treatment and great inconsiderateness towards servants be corrected? Imperfection in education, or the accident of being born in a lower station of life, does not deprive the servant of his natural right to be admitted as a fellow-man and a neighbour. One special temporal duty towards a servant is taught by the example of the good Centurion in to-day's Gospel, and that is the duty of attending to the servant in sickness. What does he do? He does not, just because the poor servant is unwell, cast him off unheeded, but he is full of solicitude for him, and has recourse even to extraordinary means in order to gain his recovery.

The sacred Scriptures are full of exhortations and examples upon this duty. *If thou have a faithful servant*, says the wise man, *let him be to thee as thy own soul: treat him as a brother, because in the blood of thy soul thou hast gotten him.*[4] St. Paul, in a most practical exhortation upon domestic duties, at the end of his Epistle to the Ephesians, after having given to servants an instruction, to which we shall attend in a moment, on their duties to their masters, says: *And you, masters, do the same thing to them* [your servants], *forbearing threatenings; knowing that the Lord, both of them and of you, is in Heaven, and there is no respect of persons with Him.*[5] And how the holy Apostle was influenced in his own conduct by the principles he wishes to infuse into others, is manifest from his short and touching Epistle to Philemon, the object of which was to ask Philemon's pardon for his servant Onesimus, who had incurred his master's displeasure, but had been converted to the faith by St. Paul. *I beseech thee for my son, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus. . . . Do thou receive him as my own bowels . . . not now as a servant, but as a most dear brother. . . . If, therefore, thou count me a partner, receive him as myself. And if he hath wronged thee in anything, or is in thy debt, put that to my account.*[6] What a lesson of charity is here taught by the great Apostle! With the solicitude of all the Churches upon him: broken down by labours: *an old man and a prisoner*,[7] as he styles himself in that affectionate letter: he seems to have but one object upon which his thoughts are fixed, and that is a poor runaway servant!

Another temporal duty, more definite, and more solemnly binding on the part of the master, is to pay the servant just wages.

[4] Ecclus. xxxiii. 31. [5] Eph. vi. 9. [6] Philem. 10-18.
[7] Ibid. 9.

The covenant that is implied in such a case is like that expressed by the master of the vineyard in the parable of the labourers : *Go into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just.*[8] Here the law of justice must be enforced : not the law of charity merely, which is less capable of having its limits sharply drawn, but the strict law of justice, which is quite intelligible and capable of clear application. A debt is contracted, and it must be paid. And you know that a debt of this nature is so much protected by God, that He takes upon Himself the act of avenging its neglect ; as one of the sins which cries to Heaven for vengeance, is 'defrauding labourers of their wages.' Hear what the wise man declares upon this point : *The bread of the needy is the life of the poor : he that defraudeth them thereof is a man of blood. He that taketh away the bread gotten by sweat, is like him that killeth his neighbour.*[9] It is difficult to conceive anything more cruel or more unjust, than refusing to pay servants what they have earned by their labour. It is not money or outward goods they have advanced to you on condition of repayment ; it is something nearer to them : it is a part of themselves, of their strength and their life, they have bestowed upon you, on condition that you give them an acknowledged equivalent. To overwork and underpay them : to take advantage of the circumstances in which Providence has placed them, and grind them down to the paltriest wages, as this is against that principle of justice written in your heart, which forbids you to do to another what you would not have done to yourself, so will it form a part of the account you will one day have to give to the Judge of all : the Lord of the master as well as of the servant.

Towards his servant the master has also spiritual duties, which are binding upon him ; for the soul of his servant is in some degree under his keeping. Briefly, his duties in this respect are these : He must interest himself about the servant being instructed in the essentials of faith. Without attempting to proselytise in regard to those who are not of the Church, at least the master can and ought to take an interest in the spiritual welfare of his servant, and offer no impediment to his acquiring a knowledge of what he must know in order to be saved. He ought to take the opportunity, as it may present itself, of advising the servant to seek for instruction and to pray for light. In every case he ought to allow time for the fulfilment of the religious duties, by which the servant is to sanctify himself in his state of life. He must keep him from dangerous occasions into which he may be led through persons or places, from which the watchful eye of a master may

[8] Matt. xx. 4. [9] Ecclus. xxxiv. 25, 26.

screen him. If that old saying which tradition assigns to the Apostle St. Mathias be true : A Christian sins when his neighbour sins : any one who is bound by a responsible tie towards a neighbour, must try to avert the sin which threatens him. Good example, which is a great preventive of sin, must not be omitted, as it is a duty which the master owes his servant. The respect which a good life always deserves must have its influence on the whole household ; and when the master shows himself by his own conduct what he wishes his servant to be, truthful, honest, temperate, and diligent in duties to God and man, he will have done more towards forming a good servant than all his words of admonition or acts of correction can possibly realise. St. Paul, in writing to a Bishop, St. Timothy, does not consider it unworthy of episcopal vigilance, to show solicitude in regard to the households of his diocese. And the duties of master towards the servant are included in the strongly-expressed admonition : *If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*[10]

There is certainly much here for masters to think upon : much that will be examined into at a future day, and which it is well, therefore, that they should attend to, whilst in life they are preparing matter for their future judgment.

III. And the Servant also is reminded to-day of his duty of imitating the fidelity and obedience of that servant, of whom his master was able to bear the testimony : *I say to my servant : Do this ; and he doth it.* Let servants remember their responsibility : that they have to answer not to man only, but to God also ; and that they have, therefore, high and noble motives to urge them to a faithful discharge of their duties. These duties towards their masters may be reduced to three : respect, obedience, and fidelity.

They owe respect to their masters ; for it results from their condition and their dependence. The servant is living under authority, and as all authority is from God, it is God Himself who is respected in the person of the master. The respect must be inward as well as outward ; and if not inward it is not likely to continue to be manifested outwardly. This want of proper respect to those who are above them is, unfortunately, a fault which shows itself too frequently now-a-days. The servant is not on a level with his master, and he has accepted his position with the understanding that he is inferior, and he must show his sense of inferiority. Our Blessed Lord says to His Apostles : *Which is greater : he that sitteth at the table, or he that serveth ? Is it not he that sitteth at the table ?*[11] And the same Apostle who

[10] 1 Tim. v. 8. [11] Luke xxii. 27.

wrote to the Bishop good advice to give to masters towards their servants, in the same epistle says of servants: *Whosoever are servants . . . let them count their masters worthy of all honour.*[12]

Obedience is another duty, and a self-evident duty, on the part of the servant. *I say to my servant: Do this; and he doth it*, is what ought to be said of every servant. To obey his master is essential to his state. He has been engaged, and he is paid, not to do his own will, but the will of him who has engaged and who pays him. And he is guilty of injustice if he does not obey, because he is breaking through the compact which he has made, and by which he must know that he is bound. Hearken again, ye servants, to what St. Paul says to you; and it is the Holy Ghost who inspired him to say it: *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling . . . not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.*[13]

The servant also must be faithful to his master. He is, more or less, but always to a certain degree, in an office of trust. Confidence is reposed in him, and he must not betray it, or else he is violating a pledge which has been given and accepted. He must watch over the interests of his master, as we have said that the master is bound to consult those of his servant. The happiness and peace of a family are oftentimes at the mercy of a servant, who by culpable neglect, or a betrayal of confidence, may be the cause of dangers and evils which he alone can avert, and against which he is engaged as a security. In another of his pastoral addresses to a Bishop, St. Paul insists upon this quality of fidelity in servants; for so does he say to Titus: *Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters, in all things pleasing, not gainsaying: not defrauding, but in all things showing good fidelity.*[14] The servant must remember that the things under his care are not his own, and so he is bound by justice to guard them for their owner; and every act of wilful negligence is upon his part, therefore, a violation of the compact by which he has bound himself, in accepting the duties which he knows belong to his state.

Servants, there is much for you to think over, and to examine yourselves upon in matters which are now suggested to you! You have special duties in your state of life, and you must be careful to fulfil them. Your own perfection and salvation depend upon their fulfilment, and the well-being of others is oftentimes at your mercy. Charity and justice have claims upon you, and these claims weigh very heavily before the tribunal of God.

Now, my dear brethren, here are principles which you can-

[12] 1 Tim. vi. 1. [13] Eph. vi. 5, 6. [14] Tit. ii. 9.

not help admitting. Bear them in mind, and act upon them. How good is God to enter as He does into our social being, and to become the link between master and servant; and how holy must that link appear, when we remember Who forms it, and what is its nature! It is God who exercises the authority of the master, and who accepts as to Himself the obedience of the servant. All authority is from God: here is a high motive for the master not to abuse his position. All obedience is paid unto God: here is a high motive for the fidelity of the servant.

The great mystery of the Incarnation exalts the character of the servant, and represents his office in a light by which both master and servant ought to be influenced. Obedience and submission brought down the Son of God upon earth, and made Him a servant. He came down not to be ministered unto as a Master, but to minister as a servant. See Him washing the feet of His disciples, and hear at the same time His caution against lording it one over another. In His Church He wills that what He did should be done; and those who bear the highest offices are called Ministers, as the highest and first of all is the Servant of the servants of God, Servus servorum Dei.

We read of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, from whose life every Christian household may gain much instruction, that she was particularly solicitous about her servants, especially of their spiritual welfare. The Centurion in to-day's Gospel, who was so much praised and blessed by our dear Lord, showed his affection for his servant. He may have remembered with gratitude the many acts of faithful obedience which he had performed, and all his anxiety about his welfare. So let it be with all who are concerned in these important relative duties. Let charity and justice regulate you in what concerns this ordinance of God. Then will God bless you: and instead of simply increasing each other's responsibility as master and servant, you will be contributing to your mutual happiness, peace, and merit, and be helping each other forward on your way to Heaven.

SERMON XIV.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

ADVANTAGES OF TRIALS.

Why are ye afraid?

From the event recorded in the Gospel of this Sunday we may learn two truths of great practical importance: one of which not the Gospel only but the whole experience of life brings home to us; and the other of which both the Gospel and the whole experience of religion ought to place beyond the possibility of doubt. The fact of the disciples, when they had left the shore and had followed Jesus into the ship, being overtaken by a storm, and being exposed to the danger of shipwreck, tells us of the first truth, that throughout life we must always expect trials, and that especially when we enter more earnestly into the service of God, we must prepare our soul for temptation.[1] The Gospel and the whole experience of life assure us of this. And the fact of Jesus quelling the storm when the danger was at its greatest, and rebuking the disciples for their timidity when they knew that He was with them, asking them: *Why are ye afraid?* and then dispelling the cause of their fear, by commanding the winds and the sea, and creating a great calm, tells us of the other truth, which the Gospel and the whole experience of religion bring home to us, that in the midst of trials help is always near at hand, and that there is never any reason, however great and threatening the trials may be, to give way to fear or despondency.

The disciples, entering into the boat, are a figure of our own entering upon the great realities of life; and entering it after our Lord and in company with Him, they represent our life, in connexion with our duties of religion, and remind us that life is to be spent in the service of God, in company with God, and under the guidance of God. The storm is a figure of our trials, under which we are too apt to forget Who is with us. The sleep of Jesus in the boat represents the apparent non-interference of God, till we

[1] Ecclus. ii. 1.

call upon Him for help, which He quickly and effectually grants. There is much for us to learn from this incident; but our lesson will be more intelligible and more practical, if we look into the nature of the trials to which life is obnoxious; and if we then pass on and see the many advantages which result from them. It is to us our dear Lord addresses the words: *Why are ye afraid?* And in asking the question, He intends to help us to courage and confidence.

I. What do we mean by trials? The word explains itself; for it is used to express occasions for proving our virtue; so that trials are tests, by which God wishes to discover what is in us. In this world we are in a state of trial, and it is God's will and intention that we should be so. We might sometimes, perhaps, be inclined to wish that it were otherwise, but it *is* the case. Empty and idle wishes can avail us nothing; for it is a truth beyond all doubt, that we have and must have trials throughout our life. It is a necessity; and how we are to make a virtue of it we shall see in due time.

Trials come upon us from many sources. First, they come from *God*, who has a wise purpose of His own in sending them upon us. When they come directly from Him, they must be for our good and our instruction, for He wills nothing except what is for our benefit. St. Paul quotes to this effect the admonition of the wise man: *My son, reject not the correction of the Lord, and be not faint-hearted when thou art chastised by Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth.*[2] Who does not know the instances of Abraham and Job, friends of God, and yet so severely tried by Him, that they might merit for themselves, and might leave to others such noble examples of obedience and patience? Again, trials come upon us from *others*. This is a consequence of our social state. It is not well for man to be alone; but still in being with others, we are liable through difference of interests, varieties of tempers and dispositions, to meet constantly with occasions which are trying to us. They may arise from friends or from enemies: from those of our own household, or from strangers; and just because we gain advantages from connexion and intercourse with others, we must expect contradictions and trials also. And we *ourselves* are very frequently the cause of our own trials. Through infirmity of health, susceptibility of character, too great a tendency to self-love, and an impatience of contradiction, instead of accepting peacefully the consequences of events which occur about us, we become our own tormentors, and can trace the origin of such trials to ourselves.

[2] Prov. iii. 11; and Heb. xii. 5.

Then there is such a variety of trials to which we are subject. *Physical* evils, such as sickness, bodily pain and suffering, are a necessary consequence of the imperfection of our state. *Mental* trials, such as melancholy, anxieties, causes of sorrow, and the results of natural character, oftentimes far more afflicting than physical trials, are apt to assail us at any time. So the mental trials of our dear Lord during His Passion are always represented to us as the most acute to which He was subjected in those hours of anguish. Then there are the trials of our *social* state; poverty with its privations, and riches too with the solicitude which accompanies them, find their victims all round the world. And there are *spiritual* trials, oftentimes the severest of all: temptations with all the humiliations which they imply, doubts which tear the soul asunder, scruples which make the road of the spiritual life so painful to pursue: these are by no means unfrequent, as experience may bring home to many amongst us. And sometimes it is not one or another of these trials which assail us, lasting perhaps for a short time; but they may all, or many of them, be combined together, and continue to press upon us through a great portion of our life.

And all this variety of trials is willed or permitted by Almighty God for many reasons. They are not to be interpreted necessarily nor ordinarily as signs of His displeasure, seeing that He sends them down upon His most favoured friends. In the opening of the book of Job we read the character of that holy Patriarch, how *he was simple and upright, fearing God, and avoiding evil.* You know how thickly afflictions of every kind were poured down upon him, and how his patience was blessed and rewarded by God. Almighty God does allow them frequently to come upon us in punishment of our sins; and under their pressure we may well cry out as did the dying penitent thief: *We indeed are receiving justly the due reward of our deeds.*[3] But what a mercy it is to us, that our good God thus allows us to be making some atonement gradually and during our life for our sins, instead of His treasuring up all the punishment to be visited upon us after death! Imagine that in a school, the faults that were committed during the year were noted down, to be punished but once in the year, and that then a heavy accumulated punishment was inflicted; what would be said and felt by the young victims of such a scheme? Punish us, they would say, when we have committed our fault. Finish with it there and then; but do not bring upon us all at once the sum of so many smaller punishments, and thus make it grievous beyond our power to endure.

[3] Luke xxiii. 41.

And in trial of our virtue, and for our greater merit, does Almighty God allow us to undergo sufferings and trials. This was the direct challenge in the case of holy Job, when the evil spirit is represented as defying him to persevere in his fidelity to God, if he were only permitted to heap trials upon him. Yet what was the result? He blesses the Name of God, makes his acts of resignation; and *in all these things Job sinned not by his lips, nor spoke he any foolish thing against God.*[4] We are expecting a great reward hereafter for the virtues we practise here below; but how can we prove our virtue except on the occasions on which Almighty God wishes to find what is in us? A soldier cannot be pronounced brave who has never seen service; and St. Paul, himself a valiant combatant and a sufferer for the faith, expresses the principle upon which we must all be ready to act: *He that striveth for the mastery, is not crowned except he strive lawfully.*[5] And God is thus carrying out His own designs in allowing us to be tried; for we are only here for a time, in a state of probation, and fulfilling a condition to which our future reward is attached. *Be thou faithful unto death*, He says to each of us, *and I will give thee the crown of life.*[6] Observe particularly, that those who were in their state of trial in to-day's Gospel, were not the ones who remained on shore away from Jesus, but those who followed Him into the ship, and were nearest to Him in the time of their anxiety. They were the ones who, being near to Him, could cry out with confidence: *Lord, save us; we are perishing!* And because He was close to them, and knew what they were suffering, He gave them immediate help, having first encouragingly and affectionately said to them: *Why are ye afraid?*

II. Now we will go a step further in our inquiry, why it is that it pleases Almighty God to allow trials to befal us: and we shall see the great advantages they bring to us, in the virtues which we have already said they afford us an occasion of practising. It may be asked, why God, as a good and loving Father, does not spare us the afflictions which it is in His power to avert from His own children; and in answer to the question we might say, that if we could only give natural reasons it would be difficult to find a solution; but admitting supernatural principles it is not difficult to do so. See, now, how trials help us on in the supernatural life, and in the attainment of the one great end for which we have been created, and towards which we must aspire. Let me record, by way of suggestion, the number of virtues which are evoked by trials; and then I must ask you: *Why are ye afraid* of what is an occasion of such blessings to you?

[4] Job i. 22. [5] 2 Tim. ii. 5. [6] Rev. ii. 10.

Trials help you to exercise your faith; for they lead you to think of another world, and convince you that you have not your lasting habitation here. If everything here below went on too smoothly with you, you would begin to forget, or at least you would be tempted to forget, that you have another home towards which you are to be ever directing your thoughts and actions, that your Father is in Heaven, and that it is thither He is ever calling you. You have an instance how calamities awaken faith in the history of king Manasses, who in the days of prosperity, when the world shone upon him, did evil and brought great ruin upon himself and upon his kingdom. But when he fell into misfortune, and trials were multiplied upon him, we read of him: *After that he was in distress, he prayed to the Lord his God, and did penance exceedingly before the God of his fathers.*[7] And our Lord, in the Gospel of to-day, you will observe, accuses His disciples of too great fear because they had too little faith: *Why are ye afraid: O ye of little faith?*

Hope also is immediately excited by the trials which visit us. Prayer, which is the expression and outward manifestation of hope, is in a manner forced upon us by trials. Our Lord is sleeping, and the Disciples say nothing to Him, until their fear compels them to arouse and address Him, and call out for help. It was not faith only, but the results of it, hope and prayer, which Manasses exercised, as we have seen in the words just cited. And we have another similar example in the case of the good king Josaphat. Messengers come and tell him that a great invading multitude is marching against him. He is seized with fear, and betakes himself to prayer. He summons all his people to join with him, and in the temple of God they pour out their supplications. They remind the Almighty of the covenant made upon the day of the dedication of that house, that if they called upon Him therein in the time of affliction He would hear and save them; and they end by saying: *As we have not strength enough to be able to resist this multitude, we know not what to do, and we can only turn our eyes to Thee.*[8] Their hope was not misplaced; for they quickly found their fear turned into the joy of victory. And to-day we find the Disciples soon after their alarm, and the prayer it called from them, witnessing a great change. The storm ceases, and at the word of Him, whom the winds and the sea instantly obeyed, *there came a great calm.*

And what an opportunity is there not given to every soul that pretends to the least feeling of generosity, to find in trials an

[7] 2 Par. xxxiii. 12. [8] Ibid. xx. 2, 12.

occasion for the highest virtue of love! They afford an opportunity of making some sacrifice to God, and that is always well-pleasing to Him. They are helps towards union with God, because a trial is a link between God and ourselves: it comes from Him and is accepted by us, and therefore it is something that exists between us and Him: He is touching one end of the trial, because He offers it to us; we touch the other end when we receive it from Him; and thus it unites us with Him, and satisfies love, which always aspires to union. And as Christ suffered for us, and thus proved His love to us, so we, in suffering for Him, prove ours, and make Him a return of love. If trials, then, can help us to love God, why are we afraid?

Resignation, again, which is always acceptable to God, and valuable to the soul, is suggested to us upon the occurrence of every trial. This was the act exercised by our dear Lord in the onset of His bitter passion. When that heavy trial came upon Him, He bowed down lovingly under the hand of His Father, and always *saying the self-same word: My Father . . . Thy will be done*,[9] set us an example how to act under our trials. It is easy enough to make acts of resignation when all goes well with us; but when adversity is upon us, one act of resignation is worth a hundred acts at other times; and thus it is that trials help us so much to gain the great merit attached to that prayer practised, sanctified, and preferred by our suffering Lord. Why, then, should we fear?

Humility, that virtue which is at the root of all perfection, is taught and brought home to us by this same means. Trials are a secure caution against self-flattery. It is well for us that God humbles us by them, as otherwise we should be tempted to be claiming merit for ourselves, and should be running the danger of spiritual pride, the greatest of our enemies. They prove to us how weak we are: and it is good for us to know and admit that truth. They teach us to look into ourselves; and this self-study is always of advantage. They help to detach us from creatures, and from this world, of which we might become too fond, if we did not sometimes experience its bitterness. And, what is of great importance, they teach us to bear with others; for as we wish to meet with sympathy in our sorrows, we are taught to be willing to extend sympathy unto others. Such was St. Paul's practical advice, to bear with each other *in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou be tempted*.[10] And he argues that Christ knows how to show mercy to us, having Himself been a fellow-sufferer. *We have not a high-priest who cannot have com-*

[9] Matt. xxvi. 44, 42. [10] Gal. vi. 1.

passion on our infirmities; but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin.[11]

Now, when we consider all these helps, and suggestions, and incentives to virtue, of which trials are the occasion, are we to be so much afraid of them, or not rather to welcome them, when it pleases a good God to visit us with them? God is with you in your tribulation: He is preparing you for your future reward, by enabling you to gain merit in the present: *Why*, then, *are ye afraid?*

III. We have not yet acquired the high perfection of Saints, who so much loved trials, as to beg of God to heap them upon them. We cannot bring ourselves to adopt their mottoes: 'To suffer or to die:' 'Not to die, but to suffer;' but what we ought to force ourselves to do, when we see, as we cannot help seeing, the advantages of trials, is to accept those which come upon us with resignation and cheerful submission to the will of Him who sends them to us. In order to encourage ourselves to accept them in this spirit, we must remember the example of our dear Lord. He was the Beloved Son in Whom His Father was well pleased; and yet what was the lot that befel Him! *When joy was set before Him, He endured the Cross.*[12] If there had been anything better, the Father would have given it to such a Son; and yet, see what was marked out for Him!

And His Mother, too, holy, immaculate, full of grace, what was her fate? What else could be the destiny of the Mother of a suffering Son, except a share in His sufferings? *Thy own soul a sword shall pierce,*[13] was a prophetical declaration announcing her share in the sorrows of her Son, and her Seven Dolours assure us how this declaration was realised. She was to be the Queen of Martyrs; and well she deserved the title, as Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, and Calvary can testify. And all the Saints of the Church, who, by her example and that of her Son, have found their way to Heaven on the royal road of the Cross: the Confessors with their labours, the Martyrs with their sufferings, the Virgins with their self-denial, all encourage us to do what they have done, to follow the narrow road which leads to heaven, a thorny road, but yet one with such a happy issue; and to offer to Heaven that violence which alone can bear it away. With such examples to encourage us, why are we afraid?

Nor must we ever forget that we are members of a militant Church, and that we, therefore, have to bear a part in her struggles and suffering. How can we pretend to be worthy children of such a Mother, if we shrink from the contest in which she is

[11] Heb. vi. 15. [12] Ibid. xii. 2. [13] Luke ii. 35.

ever engaged? She is always bearing the Cross, and are we to avoid it? If it is true that they who wish to live holy lives must suffer persecution,[14] what kind of holiness are we aspiring to, when we are unwilling to face the little trials, which God, Who knows our weakness, and Who will not suffer us to be tempted beyond our strength, in the working of His Providence, marks out for us? Perseverance in spite of opposition is a proof of the Divine institution of the Church. We always point to this test as an evidence of her mission of God. Our perseverance also is to be proved by our fidelity under the difficulties which we must make up our mind to encounter bravely and cheerfully, that we may show we are not degenerate children of a long-suffering Church. Are we, then, to be afraid?

One more encouragement, my dear brethren, we always have, and we must be duly influenced by it. We have the very same Presence with us as the Disciples had, when in their alarm they ran to Jesus and aroused Him, calling out: *Lord, save us; we are perishing!* We have the Blessed Sacrament near us at all times. Thither we can always run for help, and never in vain. In His quiet life amongst us, He may seem to be sleeping, but as we call out to Him to assist us in our anxieties, He answers: *I am sleeping, but my heart is watching.*[15] He is the Bread of the strong; and remains with us to share our state of pilgrimage here below, in order that He may be helping us on and supporting our weakness, lest perchance we might faint upon the way. In His humble and silent abode, He is still setting us an example of patience under contradictions; for you know how few there are that treat Him with the honour and the love which He deserves. Yet He bears it all for our sake; and setting us such an example, has He not a right to rebuke us for our want of faith, and to ask us, why are we afraid?

And when you now have these thoughts filling your soul, may I not ask you, not only why you are afraid and faint-hearted, but also why do you not strive to be more generous in accepting with welcome the trials which fall to your share? Let me ask you: Would you be without trials? If so, see from what company you cut yourself off: what advantages you are sacrificing: what little hope you can be entertaining of a future reward. Who amongst you would be so bold as to dare to wish to be the master of his own destiny? Are we not better, all of us, better and safer in the hands of Him who ordains all things sweetly for the children whom He loves? He deals not out to us with one hand only, but with both. With one He gives a trial; but with the other patience to

[14] 2 Tim. iii. 12. [15] Cant. v. 2.

bear it. May His Holy Will be done in all things! May all possible honour and glory be given to Him; and whatever He wills, may that come down upon us! May He draw us further from the world, and closer to Himself, by whatever means may seem best in His eyes! And may we never forget that it is not by comforts, by a life of ease and indolence, that we are to arrive at the end for which God has placed us in this world; but that *it is by many tribulations that we are to enter into the Kingdom of God.*[16]

[16] Acts xiv. 21.

SERMON XV.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

WORKS OF MERCY.

Put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy.

THESE words of the holy Apostle St. Paul, with which the Epistle of this Sunday commences, form one of those fervid appeals with which the addresses of that warm-hearted and loving Saint everywhere abound. He is urging his children to the practice of the distinctive Christian virtue of mutual charity; and he calls upon them, in consideration of that choice which God had made of them in preference to others, as the favourites and *the elect of God*: through that holiness which ought to mark them out as having been so privileged, *holy and beloved*, to make feelings of mercy towards each other form a constant feature in their conduct, as if mercy entered into them as a part of their constitution, and that they were thus to *put on the bowels of mercy*. And you know, my dear brethren, how true the Apostle is, in such an exhortation, to the spirit of his calling, and how faithful he is to the duty imposed upon him, as a missioner of Jesus Christ. The work of the Apostle was to make his followers prove themselves to be the followers of Him that had sent him: and the proof was this: *By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.*[1]

The words of the Apostle are addressed to us, as well as to those to whom he immediately wrote them. And the law of mercy, of mutual charity and forbearance, is as binding now, as it was when it came forth fresh from the Sacred Heart of our dear Lord, and was propagated through the world by His first preachers. It is the Church that speaks to us to-day, under the influence of the same Spirit of love as inspired St. Paul. She reminds us of our membership with her; of our obligation of living up strictly to what our calling demands of us: of the evidence we must give, by practical charity, of our thus living up to the duties imposed upon

[1] John xiii. 35.

us during life, by which we shall be so minutely judged after death. This earnest exhortation must not be lost upon us; but with a good and a willing heart we will study, and resolve to practise that mercy towards others, which we hope one day to find extended to us by the God of mercy. It is a happy and a certain condition for our gaining Heaven, that we should be carrying out here below in our intercourse with each other, what God is always doing in our behalf in His gracious dealings with us.

What a beautiful view does not this give us of our great and most loving God! Great as He is in Heaven, infinitely happy and all-sufficient for Himself, surrounded by Angels, and glorified by their songs and worship, He looks down upon earth. There He sees objects to whose happiness He can contribute by showing them mercy. He shows it; but He wishes to find helpers in this work, and He calls upon us, His own creatures, to show that we bear about us a resemblance to Him that has made us, by doing what He does, and show mercy one to another. He infuses into us, therefore, feelings of compassion: He places at our disposal means by which we can give expression and reality to these feelings: He wishes men to do the work of Angels to their fellow-men, to be *administering spirits* to each other, as Angels are to us; and thus He imposes upon us the law and the duties of works of mercy.

Let us try to understand clearly what is meant by mercy, and by works of mercy; and then the lesson of the Apostle will not and cannot be lost upon us. We shall see how this god-like virtue, in its manifestations to our neighbours, becomes the privileged state to which we are raised as Christians; and how we can best prove that we are *the elect of God, holy and beloved.*

I. What do we mean by Mercy? Enter, my dear brethren, into your own feelings, and you will find an answer to the question. You will find that there is within you a movement, when any misery is brought under your notice, towards affording relief to the object thus presented. Mercy is a virtue, then, which moves us to compassionate the sorrows of others, and leads us to relieve them. It implies a feeling of pain upon our own part at the sight of misery, and a desire to remove that which causes pain in ourselves, just because we see its presence in another. How often has not your experience convinced you of this? A poor suffering fellow-man is brought before you. You see his pain, and you cannot help sympathising with him. You may be moved even to tears through the effect which the sight and presence of such misery produce upon you. You suffer yourself; and this is one and the first act which is excited within you. This is pro-

perly compassion: suffering with another. It was that which St. Paul alluded to when he said: *Who is weak, and I am not weak?*[2] Then you are moved to do something more. You speak words of comfort, and you administer relief, in order to assuage the misery which has called for your sympathy. This is mercy, and a work of mercy.

The conduct of the good Samaritan, in that beautiful parable of our dear and merciful Lord, is an illustration; and as it was drawn by Him who especially wished us to study and to imitate what He set forth in that history of a work of mercy, we shall do well to turn to it and apply for our own benefit what is there taught. The two acts are there distinctly stated. The Samaritan comes accidentally across a poor wounded and half-murdered traveller: *seeing him, he was moved with compassion.*[3] This was the first movement which he felt within him. *And going to him he bound up his wounds*, &c.; and here, in the various efforts to comfort and cure him, is the second act, a carrying out in reality what his heart moved him to desire in behalf of a fellow-sufferer.

St. Thomas of Aquin,[4] in explaining what is meant by mercy, accepts the definition which is given by the great Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine. He first of all tells us that St. John Damascene calls mercy *a kind of sadness*, for such is the feeling which the sight of misery first evokes. And then he cites the authority of St. Augustine, who defines mercy, compassion in our heart for another's misery, by which we are compelled, if possible, to administer relief.[5] You cannot help seeing that this is a natural feeling, without considering it as a virtue in the supernatural sense; for even heathens and they who know not God, nor have ever heard of His mercy, may be, and oftentimes are and must be, influenced by this natural feeling of compassion for another's sufferings. But the benefit of religion is this; that it lays its hand upon natural feelings, and exalts them into virtues. It supplies the motive, which is the will and the command of God. Religion teaches us in each neighbour to view God Himself; and for His sake, who hath said: *Whatever you do to one of these little ones you do to Me*, it impels us to act through the highest motive which attaches merit to acts suggested by nature.

That mercy is a high virtue, dear and acceptable in the eyes of God, is manifest from the commands which Almighty God has issued in regard to it. So strongly does He enforce it, that He declares His willingness to forego what is immediately offered to

[2] 2 Cor. xi. 29. [3] Luke x. 33. [4] 2. 2. q. 30, 1.
[5] 'Misericordia est species tristitiæ.' loc. cit. 'Miserum cor super miseriâ alterius.' Ibid.

Himself, rather than that our neighbour should suffer from an omission on our part of works of mercy. The wise man declares, that *to do mercy and judgment pleaseth the Lord more than victims.*[6] And by the prophet Osee, Almighty God solemnly announces: *I have desired mercy, and not sacrifice.*[7] To such works is attached a promise and condition of the forgiveness of sin: *By mercy and faith sins are purged away.*[8] And by the prophet Isaias, God makes known to the sinner a means of gaining pardon and reconciliation: *Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the harbourless into thy house: when thou shalt see one naked, cover him . . . . then shalt thou call, and the Lord will hear; thou shalt cry, and He will say: Here I am.*[9] And when our blessed Lord gives an account of the judgment of all mankind at the last day, He declares that our lot in the next world for eternity, either of possession of Him or of separation from Him for ever, is to be decided by the presence or the absence of these works of mercy.[10]

And in order to incite us to the performance of these goodly works, and to mark out for us in what spirit they should be performed, the mercy of our good God Himself is held out to us as a model and a measure. *Be merciful even as your heavenly Father is merciful,*[11] is the command given by our dear Lord in the gospel of St. Luke, which is well called the gospel of mercy, being so full of deeds and sayings of mercy on the part of our most merciful Saviour. And what is this mercy of God? what are its acts? and what are its limits? Are His dealings with us ungenerous, and are His sayings unreal? How truly does the Psalmist declare the greatness of God's mercy in his beautiful words: *The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord!*[12] And is it not so? Saints are experiencing the mercy of God here below, and they sing its praises for all eternity. Sinners experience it, by being spared until the time of pardon arrives, and by mercy they are reconciled; for *it is by the mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed.*[13] And to Almighty God St. Paul gives the beautiful name of *Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.*[14] Now this is exactly what God demands of us in our dealings with one another. He wishes, as He looks down upon the earth, to find it full of acts of mercy: that we should always be manifesting our likeness to Him, in doing one to another what He is always doing towards us: that we should be unwearied and generous in the exercise of that power which He has infused into

[6] Prov. xxi. 3. [7] Osee vi. 6. [8] Prov. xv. 27.
[9] Is. lviii. 7, 9. [10] Matt. xxv. 40-45. [11] Luke vi. 37.
[12] Ps. xxxii. [13] Lam. iii. 22. [14] 2 Cor. i. 3.

us, showing mercy as He shows it, and by present acts earning for the future that greatest act of God's mercy, by which we shall be saved, and admitted to our reward.

When our blessed Lord came down upon earth to redeem us, and to set us an example, that we should do as He did, He made acts of mercy prominent all through His career. Mercy brought Him down from heaven; and mercy characterised His whole life upon earth. St. John the Baptist sends from his prison to ask whether He was the Messias: not that he wanted the instruction for himself, for he had already preached and declared His presence, but that he wished his disciples to have an evidence of His divine mission which they could not doubt. And what is the answer? *Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached unto them.*[15] What evidence is this but the evidence of works of mercy? And early in His missionary life, in the synagogue of Nazareth, He interprets of Himself the saying of the prophet Isaias: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me: wherefore He hath anointed Me; to preach the gospel to the poor He hath sent Me, to heal the contrite of heart: to preach deliverance to captives, and sight to the blind*, &c.[16] And did He not faithfully fulfil this mission of mercy? In defence of His Divinity we point to His miracles: and what else are these miracles but deeds of mercy to the poor and the afflicted? They do indeed prove Him to be God; and they prove Him to be a God of mercy.

And His lessons are everywhere in harmony with His actions. St. Luke tells us that the gospel is a record of *all things which Jesus began to do and to teach.*[17] His actions go before His lessons, but both are in the strictest harmony. And what are these lessons? *Love one another, as I have loved you:*[18] not friends only, but enemies also:[19] forgive those that have injured you, not once or seven times, but seventy-times seven times.[20] To feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to give shelter to strangers, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick and the imprisoned, are declared by Him to be the acts which are to be examined into by Himself, when He will come to judge the world; and He promises to reward upon that day, as if done immediately to Himself, what in this regard we have done towards the suffering objects whom we meet with, or whom we can so easily find out in our intercourse one with another during life. Oh, my dear brethren! we are the children and the disciples of Jesus Christ.

[15] Matt. xi. 5. [16] Luke iv. 18. [17] Acts i. 1.
[18] John xiii. 34. [19] Luke vi. 35. [20] Matt. xviii. 22.

How are we to prove that we deserve the title? Hear once more the sign by which we are to be recognised: *By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.*

The Church, too, to which is committed the task of continuing upon earth the work and the lessons of her holy Founder, shows how faithfully she discharges her duty by her assiduity about deeds of mercy. To us of the clergy she entrusts her ministerial work, but she especially urges us to be active and constant about these acts. To us particularly is given the care of the poor, of the sick, of those that are in any kind of want, corporal or spiritual. In her desire to supply most perfectly the wants of sufferers, the Church has shown herself fertile in founding her active orders of charity in the religious state. And to all of us who have this responsibility in some degree or other imposed upon us, it is always a comfort to remember that there is an obligation upon us to do what is sure to be rewarded; for such is the case with acts of mercy.

II. Now, my dear brethren, in a matter of such practical importance, let us go a step further, and see more clearly what are the works of mercy which, as good and sincere Christians, ought to engage us. We understand clearly what is meant by mercy. What are its works? For it is with mercy as it is with charity. There is a general law and principle of mercy, as there is of charity; but there are details and special applications of the principle, which we must know and comply with. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, is the general law of charity in its second branch; but it has pleased Almighty God not to allow the obligation of that law to remain indefinite; and so He has vouchsafed in His commandments to prescribe, in the second table, many of the duties resulting from the general principles by which we are to be regulated in our intercourse with others. So is it with the law of mercy. The Church in her instructions to her children marks out for us very clearly the objects which call for mercy, and how by our works those calls are to be attended to. She will not have us to be satisfied with mere sentiment which costs nothing, and which nature itself evokes; but she wishes us to be sincere and practical, to act in conformity with this sentiment, and thus to allow mercy to have its full bearing; for we have seen from its definition, that it implies not only a feeling of compassion, but also a desire to adopt the means of affording relief.

Go to the very practical Epistle of St. James, and you will see how that Apostle, who had been formed under the training of our dear and merciful Lord, protests against that mere sentiment,

by which some persons flatter themselves that they are doing something good, just because they entertain a feeling which they can scarcely resist. *If a brother or sister*, he says, *be naked, and want daily food: and one of you say to them: Go in peace, be you warmed and filled: yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit?*[21] *Religion clean and undefiled*, he elsewhere says, *is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation*,[22] &c. How much does this resemble the instruction of our Blessed Lord at the end of His practical sermon on the mount, at the beginning of which, in enumerating the eight Beatitudes, He had pronounced a special blessing on the merciful, and at the conclusion of which He says in such practical words: *Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of God; but he that doth the will of My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven!*[23]

In order, then, that we may have the fitting objects the more clearly brought before us, the Church enumerates for us in two classes what those objects are. Man consists of soul and body, and each of these has its wants. There are spiritual works of mercy which supply the wants of the soul; and corporal works, which answer to the calls of the body. And of each there is the sacramental number of seven. Sacramental, I say, for it is not in number only, but in reality also, that these holy works resemble the divine operations of the sacraments. A sacrament is an outward sign of inward grace; and these good works are outward manifestations of an inward love.

Are the objects in whose behalf these works are to be exercised hard to find? Does not the world abound with them? Poverty, sickness, sadness, suffering of one kind or other, meet you on every side. Providence places them before you, and their appeals cannot escape your notice. Even if you cannot bring yourself to do what saints, distinguished for mercifulness, have done: if you cannot urge yourself to be active in seeking out these objects with the zealous love of St. Vincent de Paul, you can resolve not to turn away with a hard and unmoved heart, when your charity and mercy are besought in behalf of your afflicted brethren. *Put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy.* One reason why Almighty God allows so much misery to exist in this valley of tears is, that mercy may have an abundant sphere to work in, and that we may have the more frequent occasions for gaining the merit which always attends upon this god-like virtue.

Here there is given an opportunity for atoning for our sins;

[21] James ii. 15, 16. [22] Ibid. i. 27. [23] Matt. vii. 21.

for works of mercy are penitential and expiatory. *Redeem thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor: perhaps He will forgive thee thy offences,*[24] was the commission given by Almighty God to Daniel, to communicate to the wicked king of Babylon. *Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee,*[25] is the practical advice of the good patriarch Tobias, who, for a further encouragement towards acts of mercy, for which he had himself been so distinguished, adds this assurance: *Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness.*[26] And hear in what solemn terms Almighty God binds Himself to yield to the influence of such works. *Learn to do well,* He says by the prophet Isaias:[27] *Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge for the fatherless, defend the widow: and then come and accuse me, saith the Lord. If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow: and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool.* What power, then, have not these works before the tribunal of God! and what an inducement have we not to be active in exercising them! It is owing to this power of appeasing Almighty God and gaining His pardon, that St. Vincent de Paul prescribes them as a great means for securing a happy death; for he used to say that he never knew any one fear death who loved the poor.

You will also find in such works, my dear brethren, an antidote against the influence of the world. This seems to be the meaning of the saying of St. James, who, after stating according to the words we have already cited, that religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, adds, *and to keep oneself unspotted from this world.*[28] For the tendency of the world is to harden the heart against the working of the grace and love of God: it is to draw the soul towards earthly things and away from heaven. But deeds of mercy soften the heart: they make the soul more and more like unto God, and more impressionable under the influence of the Spirit of that God, who commands us to be merciful even as He is merciful. And this is our great struggle and battle. Our life upon earth is a constant warfare. There are two powers ever contending to gain the mastery over us. God, that He may make us like unto Himself, charitable and merciful: and the world, that it may make us after its own character, hard, unloving, and selfish. Each work of mercy draws us towards

[24] Dan. iv. 24. [25] Tob. iv. 7. [26] Ibid. iv. 11.
[27] Is. ii. 17, 18. [28] James i. 27.

the side of God, and therefore separates us further from the influence and power of the world. It behoves us, then, *as the elect of God, holy and beloved, to put on the bowels of mercy.*

We are all hurrying on towards that future judgment, which awaits each of us, upon our passage out of this life and our entrance into eternity. As we think of that great reality, we may well clasp our hands and cry out: What shall I answer when God will come to judgment? One thing will give you confidence upon that day, and that will be the merit accumulated by works of mercy. These deeds will plead for you before the tribunal of God, and their pleading will be effectual and victorious. They will not be forgotten by the Judge Who will pronounce your doom. If upon that day, when alarmed at the view of your sins which will be brought against you, you are able to cite instances of the poor, and the suffering, and the sad, and the ignorant, whom you have relieved during life, you are sure of mercy. There will be no cherubim standing at the gate of heaven, says St. Chrysostom, with a flaming sword to forbid the entrance of the merciful, as those did whom Almighty God placed to guard the Paradise from which our fallen first parents were driven forth after their disobedience.[29] The kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor, as our dear Lord tells us in the Beatitudes, and the poor will welcome in their merciful benefactors. Confidently forward may they go, bearing their credentials, and showing their works of mercy as their claim for admission. And as they enter, the good and merciful Judge will Himself announce the reason of their being admitted. 'I have promised pardon and heaven to those who have shown mercy unto others. I have accepted as done to Myself what these have done to my little ones, the suffering and the poor. I have sworn in my truth and my love, and I am faithful to the promise I have made, when for the encouragement of all I have declared: *Blessed are the merciful; for they shall find mercy.*'

[29] Gen. iii. 24.

SERMON XVI.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

OUR LORD'S PREACHING BY PARABLES.

I will open My mouth in parables: I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.

THERE is a special feature in the preaching of our dear Lord, which cannot fail to attract our notice, either when we read His whole history in the Gospels, or when we confine ourselves to those portions which are brought before us by the Church, in her selection on the various Sundays in the year. In His preaching He constantly made use of Parables. We have a rich illustration in the Gospel of this Sunday. It is a short Gospel, consisting of only five verses. In the first three verses we have two parables; and in the last two verses we have the declaration of the principle adopted by our Blessed Lord; that He loved that mode of preaching, and that in His use of it He was fulfilling the prophecy recorded of Him, that it was thus He was to make known to the world the revelations He was to communicate, and the high lessons He was to inculcate. *All these things Jesus spoke in parables to the multitudes, and without parables He did not speak to them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying: I will open My mouth in parables: I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.* It will be well for us to dwell upon this feature which our dear Lord in His preaching thus presents to us. It is quite certain, that as He intended to be recorded for our instruction, as well as for those to whom He immediately addressed them, the parables which the Evangelists have preserved for us, we shall find much for our advantage if we try to enter into the general spirit of these lessons, attending also to the particular moral conveyed by each, as it is individually set before us at various times by the Church. To-day we will study this general lesson, and from the thoughts that will arise within us, we may hope to be influenced towards a warm and practical love for the beautiful instructions conveyed in the parables.

I. From the fact of our Blessed Lord having chosen the mode of preaching by parables, we are led antecedently to the conclusion that it was the fittest mode for conveying the moral and doctrinal truths, which, as the Wisdom of the Father, He had come to make known to mankind. The concluding words of to-day's Gospel, which we have chosen for our text, are taken from one of the Psalms of David,[1] and were, according to the Evangelist, a prophetical announcement of the distinctive character of the preaching of the Messias. It was one of the signs by which He was to be known. In the beginning of the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, the same chapter from which to-day's Gospel is taken, our Blessed Lord is represented to us as speaking to the multitudes who were gathered around Him: and *He spoke to them many things in parables.* Here is recorded His first parable, that of the sower scattering his seed over the different kinds of soil which came in his way as he moved along. His disciples are struck at His employing that method of instruction, and they say to Him: *Why speakest Thou to them in parables?* And, therefore, the fact of His adopting the plan of speaking in parables, made an impression even upon those most familiar with Him. What His reasons were we shall see as we proceed in our thoughts.

The Gospel narrative is so much made up of miracles and parables, that we may well conceive them to have a bearing upon each other, and that both of them would enforce the same body of truths. The miracles prove the Divinity of our Lord by showing His Power: the parables prove the same great doctrine by showing His Wisdom. And thus two of the Divine attributes are manifested by the Incarnate Word. The attribute of Wisdom is especially that which we might expect to be prominent in Him, who is the Wisdom of the Father, Who proceeds from the Father by the way of the intellect. As wisdom and knowledge are communicated by words, so is He the Word: reposing from all eternity in the Bosom of the Father, and coming forth in the fulness of time, to express outwardly to man the revelations which He came to communicate to the world. When there was given a choice of all gifts and blessings to the Wise man, we know that he chose that which gained for him the name by which he is known, and of which he says: *Wherefore I wished, and there was given to me understanding: and I called upon God, and the spirit of Wisdom came upon me: and I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her.*[2] What Solomon prayed for, and received as a gift, belonged by

[1] Ps. lxxvii. Attendite. [2] Wisd. vii. 7, 8.

right and by nature to our Blessed Lord. He did not inherit either ignorance or sin; and though He became Man truly and in deed, yet the Apostles said of Him: *in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*[3]

The wisdom of Solomon was particularly expressed in his parables. Of him we are told that *he was wiser than all men . . .* that *he spoke three thousand parables;*[4] and again: *he was very wise, he taught the people, and declared the things that he had done: and seeking out he set forth many parables.*[5] The object of these is told us in the opening of the Book of Proverbs: *The parables of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel. To know wisdom and instruction, to understand the words of prudence, and to receive the instruction of doctrine, justice, judgment, and equity.*[6] It was fitting, then, that our Lord should manifest His wisdom in the same manner, and should *open His mouth in parables.* Those to whom He was to preach were likely to be most impressed by this form of instruction. It was a mode acceptable to them, and in fashion amongst them. It had been used before to some extent, and successfully: witness the parable spoken by Nathan to David when he thus awakened within him a sense of the grievousness of his sins. And the same form was used by Ezechiel in the solemn and most striking scene, in which he tells us of the duties assigned to the watchman in Israel.[7] But it is not recorded of any one before or after our Blessed Lord, that parables were used in preaching, either in the same variety or to the same extent as He used them. Solomon and Ezechiel wrote, but our Lord preached His parables. Nathan spoke his to one person; but our Lord spoke His parables to vast multitudes; and thus He stands alone in the frequent and public use which He made of this form of instruction. In the whole of the New Testament we have no parable except His own. We can easily imagine how the Apostles and their followers, over and over again, and before the Gospels were accessible to the people, explained the parables which they had had committed to them; but they added not to them, as they never pretended to add to the body of truths revealed by our Lord, and entrusted to their keeping. It was their duty to teach what they had been taught, and to interpret with greater clearness what in substance had been communicated to them for their own instruction and that of their followers.

Our Blessed Lord had a great task before Him in what He had to teach the world. He had new dogmas of faith to reveal, new precepts of morality and perfection to inculcate; and we find

[3] Col. ii. 3. [4] 3 Kings iv. 31, 32. [5] Eccles. xii. 9.
[6] Prov. i. 1, 3. [7] Ezech. xxxiii.

the whole body of doctrinal and practical lessons communicated in these beautiful parables. The national principle, which had hitherto prevailed, had to be superseded by the Catholic universal principle, which He was to introduce. The Church was no longer to be that of one favoured nation: all nations were to be included in it, and His was to be the Church of the universe. The hitherto favoured people was to be rejected because of its disloyalty and unbelief, and nations which had until then sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, were to succeed to privileges abused and unaccepted by the first chosen followers of God. Realities were to succeed to figures: fulfilment was to succeed to prophecy; and it was through the parables that the people were to be instructed, prepared, and admonished regarding all these important dispensations. Thus the parables, in the mouth of Him who spoke them, were doing a kind of sacramental work: they were outward signs and expressions of inward truths and realities.

II. Let us for a moment consider some of the great truths conveyed in the parables, and we shall be led to love and admire them still more. Take the first parable which is recorded, that of the sower, and see what an abundance of instruction is conveyed in it. In the lessons enforced in this parable, our dear Lord is preparing the way for all His future instructions, and points out the various kinds of spirit in which His words were to be received. He does with regard to this, what is unusual with Him in reference to the other parables which follow: He gives the interpretation; but this interpretation is not given to the multitudes who heard the parable, but only to the Disciples.[8] For here our Blessed Lord is affirming the great and living principle of a teaching authority, which is to explain what otherwise would be mysterious or perhaps unintelligible. The seed that is sown is the same in all places: the result of the sowing differs according to the nature of the soil on which it falls; in some places there is a rich harvest, in others nothing whatever is produced. The word of God, which our Lord told His disciples was meant by the seed, does, we know, produce different effects according to the spirit in which it is received. The humble, the docile, the willing hearers accept exactly the same as is offered to others. But what a dreadful thought do we not find suggested to us, when we contrast the desolate state of our souls, with the rich and splendid treasures of virtue accumulated by others, who have not allowed a counteracting influence to destroy what God by His word and His grace had effected within them!

Add to the effect calculated to be produced by this parable,

[8] Luke viii. 9.

that which must follow from the parable contained in last Sunday's Gospel, about the cockle sown over the wheat. It is another parable about the word of God, spoken openly, and interpreted secretly. It is connected with this day's Gospel; for you will observe that the verses of to-day follow immediately after those of last Sunday, from the same thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew. The principle of an interpreting authority, vested in the teaching body appointed by our Blessed Lord, is here most strikingly enforced. Immediately after He had spoken that parable, and those which we have read to-day, the Evangelist tells us: *Having sent away the multitudes, He came into the house, and His disciples came to Him, saying: Expound to us the parable of the cockle of the field.*[9] And to the chosen disciples, not to the crowd, he gives the interpretation. Not to the crowd, that is to the people in general, does He immediately intend to make known the secrets of His kingdom, that is to say the doctrines of the faith; but it is to be done through the intermedium of those whom He has appointed for the purpose. Therefore to His chosen teachers He says: *To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables.*[10] How frequently and how earnestly must not the Apostles have urged upon their hearers the consequences following from their preaching! To them was committed the great work of teaching all people, and of spreading abroad the word of God. If any accepted their teaching, they might well thank God, as St. Paul did on behalf of the Thessalonians; *because that when you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it is indeed the word of God.*[11] And if others refused them, they might indeed with good reason turn away sadly, as the same Apostle did from the Jews in Corinth, when *he shook his garments, and said to them: Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean: and from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.*[12] And now-a-days also, my dear brethren, if any reject the teaching of the Church, or set but little store by hearing the word of God, when consecrated teachers communicate it to them, let them remember the parable of the sower, and let them have a salutary fear, lest instead of being the children of the Church, they become, like the cockle, children of the wicked one; and at the time of the harvest, at the end of the world, they be cast away, to be burnt with fire.[13]

How truly, again, do we not find the parable of the grain of mustard-seed in to-day's Gospel, to have been fulfilled in the spread of Christianity throughout the world! Starting from such

[9] Matt. xiii. 36. [10] Luke viii. 10. [11] 1 Thess. ii. 13.
[12] Acts xviii. 6. [13] Matt. xiii. 40.

humble and small commencement, the least of all seeds, which had to be buried before it could fructify, was sown and watered upon Calvary; and now every nation of the globe has found shelter under its protection; and, however unlikely it might have seemed, when proud Pharisees heard the parable, the kingdom of the Church has become Catholic and universal. A little leaven, in like manner, hidden in several bushels of meal, has affected the whole mass, and all has become leavened; inasmuch as all nations have been influenced by a power secretly infused into the world by Him, who was doing a work which was to affect all of them, though at the time of its first operation they were so unconscious of the wonderful force it was to exercise in their behalf.

What a vivid impression, too, must not have been made upon the Jews, if they only had ears to hear with, by that striking parable of the wicked husbandmen, in which the whole economy of the Mystery of the Incarnation is detailed! How must this exposition of their own blindness and cruelty have told upon those in whose past history the rejection and murdering of Prophets had played so prominent a part, and who were soon going to consummate the awful act of putting to death the Son Himself of the Master of the Vineyard, when bearing to them a message of peace! We, who have witnessed the fulfilment of these prophetical parables, know their truth. And although their first lesson to us may be a suggestion of thanksgiving, that we have inherited blessings of which others proved themselves so unworthy, they bring home to us also a lesson of the necessity of great caution and fidelity in dealing with the grace of God, lest we, in our turn, also become rejected, and less favoured souls should step in and succeed to privileges which we value too little!

III. Once more, my dear brethren, let us view the parables in the personal lessons they convey to us, with regard either to moral duties or to progress in virtue. How often must they not, as you may have pondered upon these beautiful narratives, have impressed you with confidence and courage, driven away thoughts of despondency, and filled you with active and loving earnestness! A poor sinner is exhorted to return to duties, which in his earlier days, and under happier circumstances, before the world had outbidden God in the purchase of his affection and loyalty, he had loved and practised. He hesitates perhaps, and is influenced too much by fear and too little by love. But what do we do, and how do we gain him at last to a sense of his duty? We tell him the story of the Prodigal Son. That reminds him of a home which he had once found so happy, and which he is assured

can be still as happy as ever, if he will only once more return to a Father who has never forgotten him in all his waywardness. And the moral may be further enforced by the other parables in that most beautiful fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, in which our dear and merciful Saviour twice tells us how Angels rejoice whenever a sinner is brought to repentance, and how He Himself, the Good Shepherd, bears home upon His shoulders, and presses to his sacred Heart, the rescued and saved wanderer. Has any one ever heard these instances unmoved, or pondered upon that chapter in the gospel of mercy, without feeling himself drawn with greater confidence to throw himself upon the mercy of Him, whose sacred Heart conceived, and whose tongue gave utterance to these arguments of confidence!

To those, also, upon whom it may be necessary to press the obligation of great fidelity in corresponding with the gifts and graces of God, and of personal industry in order to gain heaven, how effectively does not the parable of the Ten Talents adapt itself! There we have the principle affirmed, that *the Spirit breatheth where He will*;[14] that God deals out His graces *in measure, and number, and weight*,[15] giving more to one, fewer to another, but sufficient to all: *that every one*, as the Apostle says, *has his proper gift from God, one after this manner, and another after that*:[16] that the great Giver of grace will not have any word which goeth forth from Him, to return to Him empty;[17] and that in His retributive justice, He will demand an account, and render to every man according as he has deserved. What a lesson is brought home to all of us here: how simply, yet how fully, and how impressively!

Then that duty of charity to our neighbour, the mark by which He will have all His disciples to be known, enforced over and over again by our dear Lord, is it not impressed upon us more forcibly in the most touching of all the parables, the Good Samaritan? Practical, self-sacrificing, universal charity is the kind He insists upon, when He describes, in answer to a tempting question: *Who is my neighbour?*[18] that any one who suffers and is in want, is an object which claims the sympathy and help of every one who pretends to be a Christian. O happy fault of that cavilling and self-justifying lawyer, which gave occasion to such a telling and instructive rebuke!

Truly are these beautiful and striking parables meant for all times and for all persons. Our dear Lord said: *Behold, I am with you all days, even to the end of the world.* In many ways

[14] John iii. 8. [15] Wisd. xi. 21. [16] 1 Cor. vii. 7.
[17] Is. lvii. [18] Luke x. 29.

He has fulfilled and ever is fulfilling this promise. He fulfils it in His presiding over the teaching and the working of the Church: He fulfils it in His constant loving Presence in the Blessed Sacrament: He fulfils it by being always quick to help us in the time of trial, when we call upon Him by prayer; and He fulfils it also by continually speaking to us in the telling language of His parables. One of the objects of the ambition of St. Augustine would have been, he used to say, to hear St. Paul preaching and delivering one of his fulminating addresses to Felix or Agrippa. May not our ambition, as we ponder upon the parables, lead us to entertain even a higher aspiration, and to exclaim: O, that we could have been amongst the number of those who clustered around our dear Lord, when He opened His mouth in parables, and warmed the hearts of His hearers to confidence, charity, and an earnest fidelity in the duties which are rewarded by eternal happiness! And yet, why need we be ambitious, when our faith tells us that in reality our aspirations are answered? When we read the holy words of our Lord, and especially when we accept them as they are delivered to us by our holy mother the Church, is it not He Himself who speaks to us? *He that heareth you heareth Me*, is His own declaration; and as the beautiful parables on the different Sundays of the year, or in the various instructions proposed to us, are brought before us by the Church, it is He Himself that speaks to us, and that draws us by His own words, to accept and to follow His impressive and practical lessons.

We have to thank our dearest Lord for many things that He has done for us, and for blessings which in such generous profusion He has bestowed upon us. We have to thank Him for His Life, His labours, His acts of mercy, His miracles, His sufferings and death. For us He became a parable; bearing about Him in an outward form treasures of wisdom and grace, and dispensing blessings unto all. We have to thank Him for all His words of wisdom, His lessons of faith and practice, and for the lasting record He has left with us of the pouring forth of the thoughts of His sacred Heart, especially as they are communicated to us through the means of His touching parables. Upon us may their influence never be lost! May they produce in our hearts what He intended, when He spoke them, and willed that they should be written and preserved for our instruction! May they strengthen our faith and confidence, make us active and constant in deeds of mercy and charity, increase our earnestness and fervour, and draw us to a closer love for Him, who by His parables has proved the truth of what St. Peter so loyally declared of Him, that He possessed the words of Eternal Life!

SERMON XVII.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

WORK, THE CONDITION OF REWARD.

Call the workmen, and give them their pay.

THERE is a most important principle urged upon us in the Gospel of this Sunday, in the very practical parable which it brings before us for our instruction. It is a principle which concerns every one of us most intimately, and in a matter of the deepest moment; and therefore it will be well for us to consider it, to understand it, and to apply it for our spiritual benefit. The principle is this: that Salvation is to be secured by us, and earned as a reward, by work. Thus there is established a relationship of cause and effect: work is the cause, our future happiness is to be result and the reward of our work. Work is appointed as our condition here, if we hope to gain the consequence of rest and salvation hereafter. We have, therefore, each of us, a twofold call given to us by our good God: a call to work here, and a call to be rewarded hereafter. The householder, as we see, gave two calls to each of the workmen whom he employed. The first was the call to work: *Go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.* The second was that for payment: *Call the workmen, and give them their pay.* The first call was given earlier, the last late in the day. To each one of us the first call has already been given, for we are all sent upon our work, and ought to be engaged about it. The second call will be given, when the evening comes, in which no man can work, and we shall be summoned in judgment to give an account of what we have done.

I. The law of work is an universal law, binding on all beings that have life. For life implies work: it manifests itself in operations according to the nature of the being that possesses it. Life implies activity; and action is work. The first and greatest of all beings, Almighty God, admits in Himself no exception to this universal law. He exists, and He lives. His life is not an idle inactive life. From all eternity He has lived; and before He

became Creator, and thus manifested His power and His activity externally, there were for ever going on in His inward life those processions in the Blessed Trinity, which are called operations, or works. Such is the operation of knowledge, by which the Son proceeds from the Father: and the operation of love, by which the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Creation is a working of God, by which He manifests His power externally. And when the sacred Scripture details for us the history of creation, Almighty God is described as devoting six days to His labour, *and on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.*[1] In Providence we have a continuous work of God, sustaining and watching over what He has brought into existence. *Behold, He will neither slumber nor sleep, who guardeth Israel.*[2] Grace, again, is a work of God in our souls; for it is of this that St. Paul speaks when he says: *it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish;*[3] and, *there are diversities of operations, but the same God who worketh all in all; . . . all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as He will.*[4] And so when we speak of our duty towards grace, we use the word to *coöperate*, meaning that as it works, we must work also consistently and faithfully with it. When we consider all these workings of God, we can understand why our dear Lord said: *My Father worketh until now: and I work.*[5] Thus does Almighty God observe the law of work.

Look at the life of our dearest Saviour, who came down to set us an example. What a life of work was His! The Psalmist had said of Him: *I am poor and in labours from my youth.*[6] And did He not fulfil this prophecy? The first recorded word of His referred to this: *Did you not know I must be about My Father's work?*[7] And to His disciples when they saw Him resting under His fatigue by the side of the well, He says: *My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work.*[8] When He would prove His Divinity and His mission, He pointed to the testimony of His works. *The works which the Father hath given Me to perfect, the works themselves which I do, give testimony of Me, that the Father hath sent Me.*[9] And again: *The Father, who abideth in Me, He doth the works. Believe you not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? Otherwise, believe for the very works' sake.*[10] And when His enemies were

[1] Gen. ii. 2. [2] Ps. cxx. [3] Phil. ii. 13. [4] 1 Cor. xii. 6, 11.
[5] John v. 17. [6] Ps. lxxxvii. [7] Luke ii. 49. [8] John iv. 34.
[9] Ibid. v. 36. [10] Ibid. xiv. 10.

once threatening to stone Him, He protested by pointing to this testimony. *Many good works I have showed you from My Father: for which of these works do you stone Me?*[11] Visiting the sick, curing afflictions of every kind, instructing His apostles, preaching and labouring all the day, and praying all the night: such was the work of that life.

In the first chapter of the Gospel of St. Mark, we have sketched out for us one day's work of His. He is in Capharnaum, and it is the Sabbath.[12] He goes into the synagogue, and teaches the people: whilst teaching He is interrupted and called upon to do a work of mercy in casting out an unclean spirit. Immediately after His instructions He goes off to visit a sick person, and heals Peter's mother-in-law. Then in the evening after sunset all the sick and afflicted are brought to Him, and He heals them. Then rising next morning very early He goes into a desert place and prays. But again He is wanted for work; and so His Apostles go in search of Him; and when they find Him, they say: *Every one is seeking for Thee.* And He goes off then into the neighbouring towns and cities, and preaches in all their synagogues. Surely that was not a life of idleness; and well, therefore, might He that laboured so assiduously, point to the testimony of His works, and show what He had been constantly doing for those souls, which He had been sent by His Father to instruct in the way of eternal life, and to redeem at the expense of labour and suffering.

True and faithful to the spirit of her Founder, the Church also shows that her life is a life of work. When we remember the high interests that are committed to her care, far higher than those which are entrusted to any earthly institution, we must feel convinced antecedently, that hers must be a life of labour. The promotion of the greater glory of God: the defence of her own divine claims against the attacks of the world: the salvation of the souls entrusted to her: the instruction of her children: the administration of the Sacraments: the daily Sacrifice continuously offered from the rising to the setting of the sun in all the nations of the globe: the constant pouring forth of the tribute of prayer; these form acts and works in which she is unceasingly engaged, and in which she is ever manifesting the activity infused into her upon the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit coming down upon her with the sound, as it were, of a mighty wind, and in tongues of fire, betokened the zeal and laborious life of an institution, in which were to be perpetuated the works of her Divine Founder.

[11] John x. 32. [12] Mark i. 21-39.

II. If, then, Almighty God in His inward life and His outward manifestations is ever working: if our dear Lord, in the days of His visible Humanity, led a life of constant and active work: if the Church, which is continuing and perpetuating His life upon earth, is for ever engaged in work; who is to consider himself exempt from the law of work? or who is there that will not rather consider it as a privilege, that such a law concerns and binds him?

It is the case, then, that this law does affect you. Submit to it: accept it: and consider yourself honoured that you have a share in such a noble fellowship. There is a necessity upon you, from which you cannot exempt yourself, even if you would; and it is the necessity of work. You have been called into the Lord's vineyard, but you have been called in on purpose that you may work. Wages and a reward await you; this is your future salvation; but you must work out your salvation, otherwise you must not and cannot expect it. Those that go inside the vineyard are the workmen: those that remain outside are loiterers and idlers, who refuse the invitation to go in and work, and therefore refuse the future recompense given to the workmen, when they are called to receive their pay. For the summons is not to others, but to the workmen only: *Call the workmen, and give them their pay.*

Hence it is that idleness, sloth, is one of the deadly sins, one of the capital vices. It implies a state fatal to a future reward. It is against an implied and acknowledged condition imposed upon us, and to which we know we are bound to submit. St. Ambrose saw in idleness a second rebellion against God. The first rebellion was that of disobedience: 'I will not obey.' The second is that of a refusal to accept the penalty: 'I will not work.' Not that work was originally a penalty. When God first made man, and made him innocent, and endowed him with high and supernatural gifts, even then He imposed upon him the law of work; for so it is written of man, immediately after his creation in a state of grace and innocence: *And the Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning, wherein He placed man, whom He had formed. . . . And He took man and He put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it and to keep it.*[13] Nor can we be surprised that man, in the time of his first innocence, should have been subject to the law of work. For he was made to the image and likeness of God; and God, as we have seen, Himself practised what He imposed as a duty upon others. But since the fall, work has become a penalty. Man no longer has a paradise to dress and to keep, but the rebellious earth requires to be subju-

[13] Gen. ii. 8, 15.

gated under his hard and grievous toil. For such has been the result of the curse pronounced upon our first father. *Because thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work: with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee . . . in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken.*[14] Work, therefore, is a necessary feature and condition of our present state; and to refuse to submit to it is truly, as St. Ambrose is reminding us, a second rebellion against our Creator.

When we say that work is a condition of our state, we must not forget how this condition is to affect our future. We are called upon to work, not only in order that we may be acting in accordance with our nature, for we are not mere inert matter, as we have a living active principle within us, but especially because we are by our works to be acquiring merit for our reward hereafter. We have to work out our salvation. We are in the vineyard, and have entered it upon a contract to which we must be faithful, and our side of the contract is, that we must work. At whatever hour we have been called into it, we must go on working till the evening, and we are not to expect our pay till then. At no time during life can we claim exemption from a duty in which we must persevere steadily and faithfully until death. To each of us, with reference to our work, is made the promise: *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.*[15]

Is it necessary to point out to you what the work is that is demanded of you? For you know that in your future judgment your works will be brought forth, and by them is to be decided your fate for eternity. Wonderful may it seem to us, when we think upon it, that Almighty God, who knows all things, to whom the heart and thoughts of man are always open, and from whom nothing is kept secret, should still require the testimony of works by which to decide upon our place in the future life. What our Blessed Lord said of Himself when some were expressing a doubt about His mission, we shall have to say: *My works bear testimony of me.*[16] It is the case that they are always bearing testimony of us during life, for *we are made a spectacle to the world, and to Angels, and to men;*[17] but especially will they bear testimony of us at that time, when God is to exercise His retributive justice, and *will render to every man according to his works*[18]

You have to obey the commandments of God, and in obeying them you are doing good and avoiding evil, and are thus prepar-

[14] Gen. iii. 17, 19. [15] Rev. ii. 10. [16] John v. 36
[17] 1 Cor. iv. 9. [18] Rom. ii. 6.

ing works which are to be rewarded. These works imply the fulfilment of duties to God, to your neighbour, and to yourself: they imply the exercise of virtues, the conquest of sin, the avoidance of occasions, and the victory over temptations, which are all associated with efforts, and labour, and watchfulness; and therefore enter into the idea of active faithfulness and the prosecution of good works. Who are they who transgress these commandments? It is the indolent, the sensual, those who offer no resistance to the attacks of the evil one, and to the tendency of corrupt nature. *Man's life upon earth is a warfare;* but they who do not fight, who do not exert themselves, and therefore who do not work, are beaten in the struggle, and fail in achieving the victory, which those who offer violence to themselves are sure to carry off.

Then there is the duty of Prayer, which enters so much into the life of an active Christian. Prayer is one of the eminent good works which constitute our perfection. It is that work of God to which a curse is attached, if it be done deceitfully and negligently;[19] for which the wise man tells us that due care and preparation is required, lest otherwise it become only a tempting of God.[20] We know how our dear Lord insisted upon the duty of prayer, and what a reward He has promised to it. It formed one of the works of His own Life, and has always entered into the idea of the life of a saint. Your own experience may oftentimes have told you, that it is a work, too, which requires an effort, especially with regard to being carried on with constancy and perseverance. Indolence continually shows its baneful influence in an abandonment of prayer; and hence the dreadful evil of spiritual sloth. Tepidity, which is known by its works, as the Angel of the Church of Laodicea was told, is always characterised by a neglect of prayer; and the offering of violence to ourselves, with regard to perseverance in daily fervent prayer, is one of the efficacious means of conquering this dangerous and fearful enemy. When we feel ourselves tempted to relax in our duty of prayer, and to give way to indolence instead of exerting ourselves, it is well for us to consider addressed to ourselves the cautioning and rebuking words of our agonising Saviour: *Could you not watch an hour with Me? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*[21] How many, my dear brethren, are there not, by whom this work of a Christian is so little valued, and therefore so feebly practised! Yet it is a work which we are called upon to do, which enters into our contract, and which must most notably affect our wages.

The holy Sacraments, also, form very ordinarily a considerable

[19] Jer. xlviii. 10. [20] Ecclus. xviii. 28. [21] Matt. xxvi. 40.

portion of a Christian's work. It is in them that God works, and through them, as channels, that He communicates grace to our soul. But though their efficacy is owing to the merits of the most Precious Blood, which through them flows down upon us, yet our own part is required also; and (I allude, of course, especially to the Sacraments of Penance and the blessed Eucharist) the work of preparation, the acquiring of proper dispositions, is demanded of us, lest perchance we turn to our destruction what has been intended and instituted for the perfection of our soul. What a difference is there not between those that work, and those that are indolent, with reference to these institutions of Divine love? Why do so many keep away from the Sacraments, or approach to them so seldom? They prefer standing outside all the day idle, rather than going in to work. Yet they cannot say that no one has offered to hire them, when they hear over and over again the loving and pressing invitation that is addressed to them, to come to the banquet, and to taste and see how sweet is the Lord. Certainly an effort is required for a due preparation; but that is just the point we are insisting upon: we must work, if we hope to be rewarded.

III. At the last day, my dear brethren, when all will be called forth to be judged according to their works, the summons will be heard: *Call the workmen, and give them their pay.* Awful as is the anticipation of that day, yet what joy and confidence will fill the souls of those who know that they have worked, and that they have fulfilled a compact made with a just and a generous Master, who has laid up a crown of justice for those who have laboured to obtain it! The separation will be made between the workmen and the idlers. To the former the separating angels will be ordered to give the reward which they had bargained for; to the latter the Judge will say: I know you not. Which is to be your place? All depends upon yourself; and it depends upon whether you work or are idle. If you have been called early or later in life, but yet when you heard the voice of the Lord, if you hardened not your heart, but heeded His invitation, and at once took up your work: if you are able to show that you tried to keep the commandments, that you did works of charity and mercy, that you practised prayer, that you valued and frequented the Sacraments,—you may hold out your hand to receive your reward, for undoubtedly it will be offered to you. But if all this has been neglected, and you are excluded from among the number of the workmen, can you dare to say that you were not hired? Will not to-day's parable be turned in rebuke against you, when it will be shown that you were even more favoured than those who are here represented as called

to work? For each set of workmen is here called only once. Going out at the third hour and the subsequent hours, the master each time finds *others standing*, not the same as had been called before. But you have been called, it may be, more than once: you have had repeated pressing invitations; and if all have been rejected, who is to blame? If you are not amongst the workmen, it is because of your own refusal.

Let the Epistle of to-day add its influence to the lesson of the Gospel, and you will see what further encouragement is given to those who are willing to work. A feeling of certainty is always encouraging. It was this feeling which St. Paul, zealous and earnest workman that he was, had regarding himself, when, a little before his death, he was enabled, in his second Epistle to Timothy, to say: *I know Whom I have trusted, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him, against that day.*[22] This is the spirit, which, in the stirring words of to-day's epistle, he is endeavouring to infuse into his followers, as the Church, through his words, tries to infuse the same into all of us. *I run not as at an uncertainty.* In an earthly race he tells us that all run, but only one, the winner, gains a prize. In our race for heaven, all may run; and not one only, but all may gain that prize. So run that you may receive; for if you only run according to your power, you are as sure of heaven as if you were able to outstrip all your competitors. And thus in the parable, not only those who had borne the burthen of the day and the heat received their pay, but exactly the same was given to those who had worked but one hour. They worked from the time that they were called, and that was all-sufficient.

Work, then, my dear brethren, and do not be indolent. Work whilst you have time; for the night is coming on apace, in which no man can work. Life is the time for labour: after death is the time of rest. But rest implies previous labour: indolence is not rest, it is simply inactivity. God rested after His six days' labour; and as He has made us like to Himself, He wishes us to find our rest after we have finished our work. *Wherefore let us labour the more, that by good works we may make our calling and election sure:*[23] not simply that we may gain a future reward, but that even now we may be certain of it, and claim it as our own. In peace, in the selfsame, we may then sleep and take our rest. And the blessing, which in our charity we beg for the souls of the faithful who have gone before us, will be bestowed upon us, when, after our term of labour is over, through the mercy of God, we shall rest in peace.

[22] 2 Tim. i. 12. [23] 2 Pet. i. 10.

SERMON XVIII.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

EFFICACY OF THE WORD OF GOD.

The seed is the word of God.

THE parable contained in to-day's Gospel is in many respects especially instructive. It is so, not only because it was spoken by our dear Lord, whose words are always instructive, but because it stands first among the parables in order of time, according to the testimony of the three Evangelists who record the parables,[1] and because it has instruction, that is to say the spirit in which instruction ought to be received, for its subject-matter. The parable shows the anxiety of the great Preacher of parables, about the success of His own preaching, and of that which was to be exercised by those who were to come after Him, in doing the work commenced by Himself. With this parable He deals in an exceptional manner. He does not, as He did in almost every other instance, merely deliver the parable, and leave the interpretation and the application to be made by those for whom it was intended, and to whom it was immediately addressed. He Himself explains it ; for He desires that not a point in such an important instruction should be lost, or that any other application should be made of it except such as He intended. He does not explain the meaning to the crowd to which He addressed it, but *when He was alone, the twelve that were with Him asked Him the parable*;[2] then He gives the explanation of its various details. We can easily imagine how these twelve chosen ones would afterwards to their various inquirers communicate what they themselves had heard, and how often in their own preaching they would enforce the lessons of that first parable.

St. Gregory in his Homily on this parable observes, that unless our blessed Lord had given the explanation which He has left us of it, we might not have succeeded in seeing its full meaning. It is obvious enough now, and cannot possibly be mis-

[1] Matt. xiii.; Mark iv.; Luke viii. [2] Mark iv. 10.

taken, as is the case with many truths which are quite clear when their meaning has been conveyed to us, though perhaps not intelligible before. Who, he says, would have imagined, if left to his own powers of interpretation, that riches should be called thorns and briars, inasmuch as riches are an object of desire, and thorns and briars are what we seek to avoid? Or who might have known that by the birds which come and eat up the seed directly it is sown, is meant the devil? or even that the seed meant the Word of God? But now that that explanation has been made by Him who spoke the parable, we are not called upon to give any further exposition of it. It is not explanation, it is warning that we require. Let us, then, take the warning; and in studying in how many various ways the Word of God may be received, let it be our endeavour and resolution to accept it, so that it may produce its fruit, and thus not allow ourselves to lose the benefit of the Parable of the Sower.

I. Our Blessed Lord commences His parable by saying that *the sower went out to sow his seed;* and He commences His exposition of it by stating that *the seed is the word of God.* And yet may it not seem to us that the exposition scarcely begins early enough? Before the seed, the sower is mentioned; and yet it is not explained who the sower is. Why is our Lord silent upon this point? We may oftentimes in His silence find more instruction and more suggestiveness than even in His words. We can understand that the sower was Himself, who came forth from the bosom of His Father, furnished with all wisdom and power, to spread upon earth the knowledge of the truths which He came to make known unto men. But yet our Lord does not begin the explanation by saying: The sower is Myself. He passes over this point, in order that He might teach us that when the Word of God is communicated to us, it matters little who it may be that is instrumental in this work. All that is required is, that he be duly commissioned: that he go forth from the place in which the seed is kept: that he have a supply of the seed, and that he have power to scatter it as he moves along. Our Lord does not limit the person of the sower to Himself. He never intended this as the exclusive application; because He intended His Apostles to be sowers also; and in entrusting them with the office of teaching, He raises them to some equality with Himself, as when He says: *He that heareth you, heareth Me.*[3] And so, by passing over in silence who the sower is, it is the same as if He said: When you are engaged in hearing the word of God, consider not the person who speaks, but that which is spoken.

[3] Luke x. 16.

It is to the seed, not to the sower, that you are called upon to direct your mind.

The seed is the Word of God: it is not the word of man: and so we are at once impressed with the idea of the holiness of the work of preaching in the Church, and how totally it is misunderstood by those who undervalue its importance, or look upon it as a mere human work. The Word of God communicated to man! Take in this idea, my dear brethren, and you will see what a reality you are dealing with. What is a word? It is the expression of a thought in the mind of him who speaks. It is an expression given utterance to, in order that he that hears may know and understand what is in the soul of him that addresses him. It is the communication of mind with mind. It is the mode in which one mind influences and affects another. As one body can touch another, and make itself be felt through that sense of touch which living bodies possess, so one soul can touch another by the power of speech. The word which we speak, when heard and received by another, brings for the time being our soul into contact with another soul. I am illustrating this at the present moment by what I am now doing. I want you to feel as I feel: I want my thought to be yours: I give it to you: I want my soul to touch and influence yours, and therefore I speak to you. By my words I communicate myself to you: you hear my word, and you know my thought.

Apply this to the Word of God. The Word of God is an outward expression of His thought. It is a mode adopted by Him of conveying to our souls what He wishes us to know. He appoints some outward means for this purpose, and through that means He touches and influences our soul. He wishes our mind to be in harmony with His: our thoughts to be His thoughts. He wishes us to know what He knows, and to see and believe truths which He possesses, and which He communicates to us. *Faith cometh by hearing.*[4] And therefore God speaks in order that we may believe. There is, then, a word of God. And how does God speak? He speaks, as you know, through the ministry of His Church. In hearing the Church you hear Him; for to her is committed the preaching of the Word of God. I am not speaking controversially, and I am not called upon to you, Catholic and faithful members of the Church, to prove this elementary doctrine of the Faith. I am giving you a moral instruction upon a duty so important, as to have been chosen by our Blessed Lord as the subject for His first parable.

In many ways Almighty God may be considered as speaking,

[4] Rom. x. 17.

and showing the efficacy of His Word. When He created the world, it was by His Word. *He spoke, and they were made: He commanded, and they were created;*[5] and again it is said: *By the Word of God the heavens were established.*[6] The wonderful Mystery of the Incarnation again is a mystery of the Word which became flesh, in order to dwell amongst us; and in that outward form we know what blessings the Word brought upon earth, and how the Wisdom of God taught and redeemed us. The work of the perfection of the Church, through the coming down upon it of the Holy Spirit, was also associated with the same reality; for the Holy Ghost came down in the shape of tongues of fire, to show how He was to infuse the gift of speaking the Word of God into the Church. And the Grace of God, a communication of Himself and His gifts, is called the Word of God; for it is of this that God declares, that a word which goeth forth from His mouth is not to return to Him void.[7] It is to be coöperated with, and thus to return its fruit to its Giver. All this shows us what holy associations are found with the Word of God. In the parable which we are considering, the Word of God means that Word brought before our minds in the office of the ministry of the Church in preaching. Hearing this Word thus communicated to us is a most important duty, upon which the salvation of our soul may depend. There can be no doubt that, in accordance with the will and the dispensation of our Blessed Lord, it most deeply concerns us. The details of the parable, in which the variety of results in one and the same act is described for our caution, assure us of this importance, and therefore the lessons must not be unheeded by us.

Two great evils brought upon us by the fall of our first parents, are to be remedied by the Word of God brought home to us by the Church: the darkness of the understanding, and the rebellion of the will: ignorance and concupiscence. The Word of God is calculated to enlighten the understanding, and thus to remove ignorance: it influences the will, and thus conquers concupiscence. By this means the great truths of faith are awakened within us: by this means love, that powerful incentive to activity, is warmed and increased. We are taught what we ought to know, and what we ought to do; and thus all doctrinal and all practical knowledge is conveyed to us. Our dear Lord found the whole world lying in darkness: He sends the Apostles forth as the light of the world, and gives them the commission to preach the Word. He found the world buried in sin: men given up to the love of sensual pleasure, and uninfluenced by the love of God. He came

[5] Ps. cxlviii. [6] Ibid. xxxii. [7] Is. lv. 11.

to cast fire upon earth, and He desired that it should be enkindled; and He infused zeal for preaching into His Apostles, and bade them to counteract one love by another: to *take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,*[8] *living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword,*[9] and by this powerful weapon to conquer hearts and gain them to God. The work has been done: the world has been conquered: nations have been converted: souls have been saved; and all has been done by sowers who have gone forth to sow *the seed, which is the Word of God.*

II. Now, my dear brethren, let us proceed, and ask how it is that the Word of God, although so efficacious, is attended with such a variety of results. Well was it that our Blessed Lord explained to His Apostles the parable which He had spoken to the multitude. He thus forewarned them of the fact of many failures in their efforts to gain souls. Even His own words, which were spirit and life, failed in many cases where they were heard. The Parable of the Sower was being verified in His own instance: He had scattered much seed, and only a little was as yet giving hope of producing fruit. He had already preached His beautiful Sermon on the Mount, and multitudes had heard it, but He had as yet gained but a *little flock* of followers; and on many His words had fallen without effect. How dreadful, does it not seem to us, must their blindness have been, that they were not moved even by the signs and labours of the Son of God! How hard-hearted not to have been touched even by His preaching! And the Apostles were warned by this Parable of the Sower not to be faint-hearted, if greater success did not attend their labours and preaching, and if they were not rewarded by the satisfaction of seeing souls influenced and gained by the Word of God. At the end of three years' labour in the ministry, such as have never been approached by the most zealous Apostle or missioner, what little outward result seems to have attended the preaching of our Lord! Crowds indeed followed Him on His last entry into Jerusalem, and sang their Hosannas; but where were they on Calvary? They were but poor faint-hearted converts, and the seed which He had sown took but little root in such ungenerous souls.

Read the Acts of the Apostles also, and you will see the parable verified again. Instances will meet you of much labour requited by very little return. Now and then the seed falls on good ground, and the hearts of the sowers are rejoiced. St. Peter must have felt buoyed up with joyful hope, when on the day of

[8] Eph. vi. 17. [9] Heb. iv. 12.

Pentecost he gathered in so goodly a harvest. St. Philip the Deacon must have felt rewarded when the whole nation of the Samaritans yielded to his zeal, and submitted with one accord to the faith which he preached to them. And the whole of the infant Church must have been cheered at the progress it was making, when its historian was able to say of it, that *the Lord increased daily together such as should be saved.*[10] Great also must have been the joy of St. Paul, when he had to deal with such faithful and generous souls as the Thessalonians, for whom he was able to give thanks to God, that they had in such numbers received the word preached to them, *not as the word of man, but as it was indeed the word of God.*[11] Yet they had their disappointments and their sad hours, when they saw the seed falling on unpromising soil. Such was the case when at Antioch of Pisidia Paul and Barnabas had to shake the dust off their feet, as they turned away from the ungrateful Jews of that city; and that same Apostle of the Gentiles before the Jews of Corinth had to shake his garments, and call down their blood upon their own heads, because they refused the grace that was held out to them.

What was the case with our dear Lord and with His Apostles, has been the case all along, and continues to be the same. The ministry of the Word of God is sometimes attended with successful results, and blessed are they that hear and keep it; but sometimes the Word falls uselessly, and woe to them that reject it, or receive it without due respect and attention! The same opportunity is given to all; for the seed which the sower distributes is the same everywhere. Why is it that the result is so different? Let us attend for one moment to the different circumstances which in the parable affect the growth of the seed, that we may understand which is our case. Only observe what an advantage we have over the various soils on which that seed fell. There the soil could not help itself, but we can. From being on the wayside, we can remove into more sheltered quarters. No amount of culture can turn a rock into fertile ground; but the Grace of God, if we are willing to accept it, can soften our hearts, and from hearts of stone, as the Prophet Ezechiel tells us, can change them into hearts of flesh.[12] Why should the sower throw away his seed, where he saw thorns and briars? Because we who are signified by such soil, can root them up if we will, and give the seed the full nourishment which had before been usurped by them. At present we may not be the best or ordinarily good ground; but we have it in us to make ourselves such, and can control all the circumstances which affect the growth of the seed.

[10] Acts ii. 47. [11] 1 Thess. ii. 13. [12] Ezech. xxxvi. 26.

Let us see what we are: let us see what we can be; and surely we will do something to make ourselves what we ought to be.

The first seed which failed fell by the wayside, and was trodden down, or devoured by the birds. They by the wayside, our Lord tells us, are those distracted, worldly-minded hearers, whom the devil easily draws away from the influence of God's Word. They are not the least impressed by it, because they are in the habit of thinking but lightly of it. They hear, but that curse seems to have fallen upon them of which our Lord speaks to-day: *that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.* The two misfortunes which befall the seed which is thrown on the wayside, are, that it is trodden down by the passers-by, and that it is picked up by the birds. The two misfortunes, which these heedless and heartless listeners incur, are from the world and the devil. There is about them a spirit of indolence and sensuality: that is the spirit of the world; and there is about them a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency: that is the spirit of the devil. Do not, my dear brethren, do not think that these are hard words. Remember it is our Lord's own interpretation: *the devil cometh and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest believing they should be saved.* Therefore, to hear in a sermon something which comes home to you, and which suggests amendment of life or increase of fervour, and then to go home, forget it all, and not act up to the inspiration, for it is an inspiration, is just the illustration of the unfortunate wayside seed. The world and the devil, indolence and pride, have carried off the good thought and the resolution. Good seed was sown, but nothing comes of it.

Some seed falls upon a rock, and even that fares somewhat better than that of the wayside. It grows up, and flourishes for a time; for there is a slight covering of soil which holds it and enables it to take root. But, vain promise! it soon withers away and no fruit is produced. How often have we, to whom is entrusted the care of souls and the work of the ministry, to lament over those who have really been influenced by lessons brought home by the Church, have taken up a better course in the spiritual life, have approached Sacraments which perhaps had been neglected for a long period, frequent them each month or perhaps oftener, come to daily Mass, are more careful about morning and night prayers; but—this lasts only for a short time. Perhaps a Retreat has been preached, and their fervour has been excited, and under this excitement they go on for a time. But at last, one duty palls upon them: probably it is the meditation they promised to make each day: then another is sacrificed, and they are seen less regularly at daily Mass: then one more yields, Holy

Communion is passed over; then daily prayers and examination of conscience are less attended to; and in a short time all is given up, graces have been played with, inspirations have been rejected, efforts at self-denial have been abandoned, old indolent habits have resumed their sway, and all their promise has come to nothing. The beautiful fresh green of the growing seed is found tinged one morning with an unhealthy fading colour: it is a sign of premature decay. Pass by and examine it in a few days; it lies withered, as if the scythe had cut it down. So with these unstable spirits. They could have deepened the soil in which the Word of God was sown within them, if they had only been humble, and had prayed each day for perseverance. The moisture of Divine Grace would then have never failed them: they would have taken deeper root, and not so easily have fallen away in the time of temptation.

What are we to say of the seed which fell among thorns? What right have thorns to be growing where good seed is likely to be sown and to flourish? Why should there be a love for riches, and harassing anxious thoughts about worldly cares, in souls which are made for nobler purposes, and in which the Word of God would otherwise produce such good results? Let me cite to you the words of St. Paul, lamenting over such souls, showing what they might be, and what they are. *The earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessing from God. But that which bringeth forth thorns and briars is reprobate, and very near unto a curse, whose end is to be burned.*[13] Why, then, my dear brethren, I have asked, why should there be thorns where good seed ought to flourish? Uproot these thorns, and let the truths of eternity, brought home to you through the preaching of the Church, sink into your heart. You can do it, and the Word of God helps you towards it. It will convince you of the one essential truth upon this matter, which it behoves you to remember: that it can avail you nothing to gain the whole world, if you sacrifice your soul; and that neither riches, nor worldly honours and pleasures, can help you in gaining a reward in that eternity, towards which you are hurrying on apace.

You can help yourselves: every one of you can fit yourselves for receiving *the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls.*[14] You can, if you will, make yourselves like the good and fertile ground, in which the seed was not ruined, but produced fruit a hundred-fold. Such is the power of the will, when moved and supported by Grace, that it can overcome every obstacle.

[13] Heb. vi. 7, 8. [14] James i. 21.

You feel at the present moment that you can do better: you feel that you are moved to do better; and it is the Word of God that is moving you. Yield to its influence: coöperate with it; for it is a Grace, and Grace ought not to be accepted in vain. Take your choice of all the various circumstances detailed in the Parable which affect the Word of God; which would you really prefer to be your state—the wayside, the rock, the thorns, or the good soil? Do not pretend to belie the Parable, and to hope to produce fruit if you are anything else but the good ground. Hear the word with a good, and a very good heart; for you have a dreadful responsibility upon you, and, unless you acquit yourself of it as you ought, the consequences will be fatal. This is no exaggeration; for unless it were true, our dear Lord would never have given such prominence to this Parable as to place it first amongst this kind of lessons, and to give us its clear interpretation.

If it were necessary to add an illustration of this Parable, showing how truly the rejection of the Word of God brings ruin, I would ask you to turn to the sixth chapter of the prophecy of Jeremias, where are recorded the evils that were in store for Jerusalem for her great fault of rejecting the Word of God, and treating with disrespect those who were authorised to communicate it to her. *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem*, says Almighty God to that unfaithful city, *lest My soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land uninhabited. . . . To whom shall I speak? and to whom shall I testify, that he may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, and they cannot hear: behold, the Word of the Lord is become unto them a reproach, and they will not receive it. Therefore am I full of the fury of the Lord: I am weary with holding in . . . I appointed watchmen over you, saying: Hearken to the sound of the trumpet; and they said, We will not hearken. . . . Hear, O earth; behold I will bring evils upon this people, because they have not heard My words, and they have cast away My law.*[15] It was to the Jews our dear Lord spoke His Parable of the Sower; and was it not called for? He must, as He spoke of the evil of not receiving the Word of God, have thought of the past and of the future of Jerusalem. Jeremias was foretelling the captivity of Babylon; and towards that our Lord might with good reason have pointed as a proof of what had been. He foreknew her next destruction, of which at other times He gave her warning; and all on account of the same reason—an unwillingness to be enlightened and to know the day of her visitation. The punishment of some may serve as a blessing to others: it is a caution and a preventive. So may it be with us! And whilst we fear

[15] Jer. vi. 8-19.

the danger of rejecting the Word of God and refusing to be instructed, we will take a further step, and, accepting with submission and thankfulness whatever God says to us, through those whom He sends to speak in His Name, we will treasure up what is offered to us for the good of our soul, and hope to be like the just man of whom the Psalmist tells us: *He shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season.*[16]

[16] Ps. i.

SERMON XIX.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

PREPARATION FOR LENT.

Jesus took unto Him the Twelve, and said to them: Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem.

We are now just upon the eve of entering upon that holy season of Lent, which the Church always especially associates with our spiritual interests. There is no time, indeed, in which she does not feel anxious about such interests. She is unwearied in exerting herself in behalf of her children; and to her all times and seasons are occasions for doing the work committed to her—of promoting the Glory of God and the salvation of souls. But as we, her children, are apt to relax in efforts which ought to be more constant in regard to what so intimately concerns us, she marks out special times in which she brings holy influences to bear upon us more effectually, and in which she appeals to us with unusual earnestness to enter into ourselves, and to attend to the affairs of eternity. Such a time preëminently is the season of Lent.

The Church, in the Gospel of this Sunday, brings before us the words of our dear Lord, in which He prepared the Apostles for what was to be witnessed in His Passion. He was about to enter Jerusalem for the last time, and the prophecies regarding His humiliations and sufferings were now on the point of being accomplished. And so He takes the Twelve aside from the rest of the people, and tells them that He is going to be handed over to His enemies to be persecuted, to be crucified and put to death; but that His Resurrection was to follow. All was mysterious to them at that time; but He wished this distinct intimation to be made to them, in order that, when the events were being accomplished, they might remember how He had foretold them, and that thus there might be less chance of their being scandalised when such a trial was to be offered to their faith. The Church, too, has an object in forewarning us of the close arrival of the holy season, during which she brings the Passion of our Blessed Lord before

us, as a special object for our contemplation. She does not wish us to be taken by surprise, lest we should, by being unprepared, lose any of the blessings of such a privileged season; therefore, to-day she calls us aside. She tells us that a solemn and sacred time is close at hand, and she bids us prepare for entering upon it in a becoming spirit. Let us listen to her admonition, and not neglect the warning so affectionately and so anxiously held out to us.

I. So anxious is the Church to-day to instruct us with regard to the spirit in which we ought to enter upon the holy time of Lent, that each of her Bishops does what our Lord did. Each calls aside his own flock, and addresses to it a pastoral instruction, for the special purpose of cautioning and encouraging all the children of the Church not to receive in vain the great Grace which Lent offers to them. And a duty is also imposed upon us —upon whom a share in the pastoral solicitude devolves—to invite and exhort the souls immediately under our care, to fulfil with an earnest spirit the duties now demanded of them. Before we meet again on this day week, one of the most important days of Lent—the first day of that sacred season, Ash Wednesday—will have passed away, and we shall have entered fully upon the duties incident to that time. We must not be taken by surprise, so as, through a want of preparation, to lose any of the graces of those days. Therefore, to-day we shall direct our thoughts towards the time now so close upon us, and prepare to invest ourselves with the spirit in which the Church desires then to find us.

The words once used by the prophet Joel, and adopted by the Church in the Lesson of Ash Wednesday, are those which we may well conceive to be addressed to us now in our time of preparation —*Sanctify a fast: call the people together*[1]—for the ministers of the Church are commanded to do what was ordered to the Prophet, and for the same purpose. The mission of the Prophet was, when great evils were threatened to Jerusalem because of its sins, to excite the people to sorrow and to an amendment of life. Therefore he urged the performance of those penitential works by which Almighty God had again and again shown that He could be propitiated; and in answer to which, instead of inflicting the threatened punishment, He would be ready to show mercy. So the Church, fearing for us when we are too insensible to our own welfare to fear for ourselves, tells each of her ministers to stand in the midst of his people, to call them together, and invite them to sanctify the time of fasting which she now appoints for them.

We are commanded not simply to fast, but to sanctify the

[1] Joel ii. 15.

fast; and it is not to be on the part of each a private and solitary act, but the works of this holy time are to be performed by us in concert with each other. Our communion and fellowship with each other are to be called into exercise, so that by assembling together in an unity of spirit we may make the influence of our penitential acts, and our cries for mercy ascend more effectually to heaven, and bring down more copiously upon us the pardon and the blessing of God. We must not forget that Lent is a holy and privileged time, and that it is also a time of great responsibility, as all holy times are. Therefore it must be sanctified and kept holy, on the same principle as must be the Sabbath. The same word is used for both: 'Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath-day,' is one command; 'Keep holy the Fast,' is our other command. And as on the Sabbath-day people do not keep it holy by praying at home, but all assemble together for a public act of worship of the God who has instituted the Sabbath; so in this holy time we perform our works of penance, not through a private inspiration, as we may sometimes do at other periods, but in obedience to a call authorised by Him, Who blesses our times of fasting as He blesses our Festivals.

See how the Church helps you towards the sanctification of this penitential season. As the Sabbath differs from other days, so does she make this an exceptional season. To-day she sounds her note of preparation for it. She addresses us in the Epistle, in the burning words of the holy Apostle speaking the praises of charity, in order that we might be moved to emulate his fervour in undertaking the task which is now devolving upon us; then, in the Gospel, she draws us aside, and tells us what great mysteries are going to be accomplished, and that we must be ready to approach their commemoration in a true spirit of faith and love. She prepares for us a Liturgy more solemn and less joyful than in the rest of the year; for her Liturgy is always the expression of her thoughts, and her thoughts are now turned upon Penance and upon the Sufferings of her Lord. Therefore it is that during Lent she brings before us, in the beautiful offices of the various Fridays, different details of the Passion, in order that not a single one may be passed over without being pondered upon, and conveying to us the particular lesson and encouragement which each act of such a tragic reality is calculated to bring home to us.

Lent is also especially the time for the frequentation of the Sacraments; and it is by a devout approaching to these channels of Grace, that the Church hopes to make us sanctify this penitential season. What she pleads for at other times, for the further sanctification of our souls, when she invites us, as she always does,

to appreciate these rich means of gaining pardon for sin and making progress in virtue, she imposes upon us as an obligation, and requires of us as a test of loyalty and of orthodoxy, during these days of salvation; for, according to the present practice of the Church, the time of Lent covers almost entirely the period during which our Paschal duties must be fulfilled. Our instructions from our Bishops announce to us that, in accordance with the commission which the one chief Pastor, upon whom devolves the solicitude of all the Churches, has conveyed to them, this essential duty must be fulfilled between Ash Wednesday and the Octave of Easter. Lent is, therefore, to the Church the great harvest-time of souls: it is a time in which those who, at other periods, shrink through indolence from what ought to be welcomed through love, are compelled to come; and in which so many sacred influences are brought to bear upon them, that they are kept in their allegiance, or are brought back to it, by the zealous and persuasive efforts which the Church never wearies in exercising in their behalf. Many a soul now in heaven can attribute its being admitted therein to a well-spent Lent, and to yielding in a spirit of obedience to the affectionate arguments urged upon them through the ministry of the Church, in days such as those upon which we are now entering; and, on the other hand, many a soul which is lost may now be regretting, in its unhappy state of eternal separation, the refusal to obey calls made to it over and over again, to avail itself of the opportunities given so abundantly in the acceptable days of Lent.

Do not forget, my dear brethren—for it behoves you to remember it—that if you are entering upon an exceptionally privileged time, you are also entering upon an exceptionally responsible time. It is God's law, that occasions of Grace must be answered for; and in our future judgment a demand will be made of the manner in which we have used opportunities afforded to us by God, though perhaps too little valued by ourselves. Therefore, even now, before the time has actually commenced, the Church calls you aside, reminds you of what is now close at hand, and conjures you to prepare yourselves, that you may not receive the Grace of God in vain.

II. Upon one distinctive duty of Lent it will be useful to give a few words of instruction; and that is the duty of Fasting. By the time that this present week is completed, four Fasting days will have gone by. The duty therefore commences this week, and it ought at once to be explained. I will state, then, what it is that the Church prescribes by her law of Fasting; upon whom the law is binding; what are admitted as exemp-

tions; and when we may and ought to seek for dispensation from the law.

1. What the Church prescribes by the law of Fasting is clear from what your Catechism teaches, when it tells you that Fasting days are 'days on which we are allowed to take but one meal, and are forbidden to eat flesh meat.' Two elements, therefore, enter into the composition of Fasting, namely, quantity and quality. With regard to quantity, what is forbidden is more than one meal. One meal, and only one meal, is allowed; and if two meals are taken, the condition of quantity, which is essential, is violated, and the law is broken.[2] It is understood that the one meal is taken at an acknowledged hour for dinner, and therefore ordinarily not before midday. But as it is usually found to be grievously trying to wait so long without any sustenance, it is allowable to take a small quantity, not more than two ounces, earlier in the morning; and for the same reason a collation, as it is called 'not a meal', of not more than eight ounces, is allowed in the evening. If it is found that the essential condition of fasting can be better observed by inverting the order, authorised instructions from the Holy See inform us, that the evening collation may be anticipated earlier in the day, towards midday, and the full meal of dinner be taken later. In either of these following ways, therefore, the Fast, as to quantity, may be observed. First, a slight collation of two ounces may be taken early in the day; a full meal towards or after midday; and a larger collation in the evening. Or, secondly, a slight collation in the morning; a larger collation towards midday; and the full meal later on in the day. Thus the essence is observed of only one meal; the collations, limited in quantity, being permitted, in order that that which is essential may be the more safely fulfilled. Some discreet arrangement upon this point, especially upon the advice of your confessor, may make the law of Fasting more easy of observance, and bring more persons, who now too easily exempt themselves, within obedience to this very important obligation. In a general instruction I do not pretend to go into fuller details. What I have stated is sufficient for most instances, with regard to the observance of the law of Fasting, as to quantity. It really is the case that many persons who, through ignorance or want of direction and advice, think that they cannot fast, and do not attempt it, and therefore lose all the merit of obedience to a law which is binding under grievous obligation, could and would observe the law, if they would do what the Church allows, and

[2] 'Refectio unica est primaria jejunii conditio: in hoc enim præcipue sita est ejus essentia, qui quidem salvata, nemo unquam jejunare dicitur.' *Gury.*

would seek and follow counsel at the hands of those who could give it to them. So far as regards the *quantity* of food allowed upon a Fasting day.

With regard to the *quality* of food, the precept of the Church states that we are forbidden to eat flesh meat : the food, therefore, must be ordinary abstinence food. In Lent, as you are informed by the Dispensations granted by the Bishop, certain qualifications are usual. Flesh meat is permitted on some days, and the use of eggs, &c. is allowed, excepting on the days specified in the Indult ; but these permissions affect the principal meal only, in the case of those who are not exempt or dispensed from the law. Therefore, at collation, flesh meat or eggs, &c. are not allowed, unless any qualification be specified in the Lenten Dispensations. Observe, also, that the use of fish is not allowed at the same meal at which flesh meat is eaten. This law binds throughout the whole of Lent, even on the Sundays ; and it also binds on all fasting days throughout the year, but not on ordinary Fridays or days of abstinence. Even those who are exempt from Fasting are bound to observe this condition.

2. The law of Fasting binds all persons who have completed the age of twenty-one years ; but the obligation of abstinence is upon those who have come to the use of reason. And therefore, as the two duties of fasting and abstinence are distinct and separable, exemption from one does not imply exemption from the other. Those who are not of age to fast are still, during Lent and on all fast days, bound to abstain. With regard to the age at which the obligation of fasting ceases, the Church has not positively stated the limitation, but has virtually sanctioned an approved opinion that those are exempt who have completed the age of sixty years.[3] The reason of this will be given in a few moments.

3. Upon the matter of exemption it is necessary to give some explanation, as sometimes it happens that persons are too easy in justifying themselves from a non-observance of the law of Fasting. Remember that the law is binding under grievous sin ; and as this fact vouches for the importance of the obligation, this obligation is not to be evaded, nor an exemption claimed without good and solid reason. At the same time it is not to be forgotten, that the Church does not intend her law on this point to press in such way as to be an intolerable or a grievous burden on

[3] St. Alphonsus Liguori, lib. iii. n. 1036, argues in favour of this exemption even in the case of robust men of 60 ; and the Holy See, in answer to the Archbishop of Besançon, July 5th, 1831, gave the well-known answer, that the opinions of this holy Saint and Doctor may be safely followed in practice.

her children. Keeping these two principles in mind—namely, the severe obligation of the law, and still that it does not bind under a grievous inconvenience, we can state intelligibly what are the causes which exempt from the observance of the law of Fasting.

Those are exempt who are physically unable to fast through such weakness of constitution as would make fasting grievously painful, and would incapacitate them from their ordinary duties. Persons of habitually weak health, or who are sick, or who are recovering from sickness, are thus exempt. It is on this ground that the Church exempts those under the age of twenty-one, as their constitution is not yet supposed to be fully formed; and on this ground also it is that it is generally admitted that persons above the age of sixty are exempt, as that age is equivalent to a state of sickness.[4] The poor, who have to beg their food, and whose means of sustenance are uncertain, are exempt. Those who have laborious occupations which are a tax upon their strength are also exempt, and this exemption includes such servants as have duties which are physically trying to the strength. Even intellectual labour, which would become grievously burdensome through fasting, serves as an exemption. In a word, all states, duties, and occupations, with which fasting is not compatible without grievous inconvenience, serve physically or morally as exemptions.

But a due distinction must be made between exemption and dispensation. Exemption implies an evident and incontestable reason for which the law does not bind. Dispensation implies a relaxation in particular cases, in which, only for the dispensation, the law would bind. Thus, all who are decidedly under the age of twenty-one are exempt: the law does not pretend to include them. But if persons, in the case of weakness of health, are not so notably and unmistakably incapacitated from fasting, as that there can be no question that the law would be overburdensome, they ought to ask for a relaxation of the law, and obtain a dispensation from their confessors, who have special permission thus to dispense with their penitents.[5] Even when medical men declare that persons are unable to fast, unless the case be unquestionable, such persons ought to ask for a dispensation and for directions from their confessors, who are to prescribe what amount of mitigation is to be allowed, as to quantity and quality.

Exemption from fasting is one of those cases in which a per-

[4] 'Morbus ipsa senectus.'

[5] 'Si causa sit evidens, per se ipsum licite potest homo statuti observantiam præterire . . . si vero causa sit dubia, debet aliquis ad superiorem recurrere, &c.' St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 147, art. 4.

son ought not too easily to allow himself to be a judge in his own cause. He may err in his judgment in either of two ways: by being too scrupulously severe towards himself, and thus be injuring his health in a manner that the Church by no means desires; or he may be too lax, and decide in favour of his exemption from a law which binds under grievous obligation, without sufficient and satisfactory grounds. There are two sayings of the Sacred Scriptures which in this important matter it would be well to bear in mind, and to act upon. One is that of the Wise man, who suggests the exercise of Prudence, when he says: *My son, do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done.*[6] And the Prophet Malachias intimates who it is that ought to be consulted, when he says: *The lips of the Priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth.*[7]

I have not pretended in this instruction, nor can I pretend, to consider every possible case, or to go into every detail. I have said what will be of practical value; and if what has been suggested be faithfully carried out, the spirit and the essence of the law of Fasting will be consulted and satisfied. Those who do fast have this great advantage, (to say nothing of the spiritual blessings that it brings them) that they are doing something which is essentially connected with the season of Lent. They who do not fast have not any such outward pledge and proof, that the penitential spirit of the time is carried out by them. And yet something must be done towards satisfying the responsibility which is upon every child of the Church, of sanctifying this holy time of Lent; for we shall have to answer to God, how we have tried in these days of salvation to make some atonement to His justice for our many sins. The name of Shrovetide, given to the days immediately preceding Lent, tells us of the manner in which we ought to be preparing to enter on this holy season. It means Confession time. And this, in the days of greater fervour, was the duty performed by earnest Christians, in order to fit them to enter with clean consciences upon the performance of the penitential works of Lent.

Surely, my dear brethren, you will not allow yourselves to be taken by surprise, when the Church so vigilantly gives you words of warning, and sounds forth for you the note of preparation. She asks you in the words of St. Paul, to invest yourselves with the spirit of charity, the greatest of virtues, without which all acts of devotedness and self-denial are of no avail. She takes you aside to hear the words of the Gospel, and lets you know what great things are about to be accomplished, and that the event of

[6] Ecclus. xxxii. 24. [7] Mal. ii. 7.

the Passion is to be again drawn out before you in the Liturgy and Festivals of this solemn time. And she asks you even now to listen to words which upon Ash Wednesday she will address to you from the Prophet Joel: *Sanctify the Fast: call the people together.* Listen, then, to all these summonses which are made to you, and you will be rewarded by greater Graces during the time of Grace. You will not be disappointed; for you will find that God will do what He always does to contrite and humble hearts: He will not despise you. And what the Prophet says will be your encouragement: *Who knoweth but that He will return, and forgive, and leave a blessing behind Him!*[8]

[8] Joel ii. 14.

SERMON XX.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

TEMPTATIONS.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the Devil.

The Gospel of this Sunday is full of most useful instruction, inasmuch as it brings before us one of the many instances in which our dearest Lord teaches us, by His example, how we ought to act in some of those circumstances, which are sure to attend us in our journey through life. Nothing is more ordinary, nothing oftentimes is more humiliating, nothing more important in its consequences, nothing more suggestive of caution, or even of instruction, than temptation. Nothing more ordinary, because such is God's will and Providence. We are here in a state of probation, and occasions must be presented before us in which our fidelity is to be proved, and temptation does prove us. Nothing frequently is more humiliating; because temptation tells us of our weakness, and it is humiliating to be reminded of that. Nothing is more important; because our constancy in virtue, and our claim to a future reward, are decided by our bearing under such trials. And nothing is more suggestive of caution and instruction; because temptation proves, as experience tells us, how easily we may be overcome, and how necessary it therefore is, to depend upon a help external to ourselves, to be gained by prayer and other means of grace, in order that we may, in the time of trial, be true to what is required of us. Therefore, our dear Saviour, who could not sin, but yet could be tempted, was tempted, and tempted three several times; and in His temptations He has set us an example, how in similar cases we ought to act, and prove our fidelity. His example is comforting and instructive; for it is consoling to us to remember, as St. Paul reminds us, that we have a High Priest who can have compassion on our infirmities; *one tempted in all things, like as we are, without sin*, and that as *He Himself hath suffered and been tempted, He is able to succour them also that are tempted.*[1]

[1] Heb. iv. 15, and iii. 18.

I. It will be well for us to understand something regarding the nature of temptation, in order that we may be the better on our guard against those incentives to evil, which have proved so fatal to the virtue of many, and, perhaps, oftentimes to our own. Temptation, in the sense in which we will consider it to-day, means an allurement to sin; it is a suggestion of what is evil, and a drawing of the will, or an attempt to draw the will, to consent to that evil. When our first parents were tempted in Paradise, the serpent began by suggesting disobedience, which was evil, and, unfortunately, succeeded in gaining consent. In to-day's Gospel the same wicked spirit, the tempter, suggested three times to our ever-blessed Lord to do what was wrong. He strove to allure the all-holy One, by placing before Him objects which he vainly hoped would draw Him to consent to what was evil; but it could not be that He who was perfect in holiness, full of grace and truth, could consent, in the least degree, to what could diminish the closeness of the union which ever subsisted between Himself and His Father.

There are three stages in temptation, as St. Gregory teaches in his homily upon this day's Gospel; and it will be of great advantage thus to analyse an act upon which so very much depends. There is first the suggestion of evil; secondly, there is delight in the object suggested; and, thirdly, consent. This means, of course, a successful temptation, in which the tempter gains his end, and sin is committed. We, says St. Gregory, oftentimes when we are tempted, yield to delight, or even give consent. But God, incarnate in the womb of the Virgin, who had come into this world without sin, could experience no contradiction within Himself. He could have been tempted by suggestion, but delight in what is sinful could not affect Him.

The first stage in temptation is suggestion. It is that act in which something forbidden is placed before us. This does not necessarily imply anything sinful upon our part, as it may be without any wish of ours that some tempting power thus tries to allure us away from our duty. In the first of the temptations to which our blessed Lord deigned to be exposed in to-day's Gospel, the devil strove and hoped to draw Him to consent to gluttony. Our Lord had fasted for forty days, and was afterwards hungry. The devil, therefore, took occasion to bring the idea of bread before His mind, and suggested to Him to use the power which, if He were the Son of God, He must have possessed, of supplying His wants and the cravings of nature, by changing the stones of the desert into bread. He had once succeeded, when to our first parents he suggested the thought of eating what had been for-

bidden. Would that that temptation had not gone beyond the suggestion, but that the wicked tempter had been at once sternly resisted, and his allurements utterly rejected, as they were by Him, who came to remove by obedience the consequences of that first fatal disobedience! Suggestions to evil, you know, my dear brethren, are frequent and abundant enough in our course through life. They may have their source outwardly in the words, the vain objects, the sinful persons, the scandalous example which accidentally, it might seem, may present themselves before you at any moment. Or they may have their source from within, in some of those imaginations, thoughts, disorderly affections, which, however unwilling we are to give them encouragement, may arise, and strive to create pleasure, and gain consent. How we are to guard ourselves, even against such suggestions, we shall see in a few moments. All that we are immediately attending to, is the fact, that the representation of evil in the form of suggestion is the first stage in temptation. Let not this be considered sinful; for it is an occasion of merit when promptly rejected. And as our dear Lord would not allow Himself to be exempt from those suggestions, made to Him by the devil, in the desert, why should we repine if the same tempter present evil before us sometimes, and thus strive to allure us from our allegiance? Surely in this case the disciple is not to be above his Master.

The second stage in temptation is pleasure and delight in the object presented. We are so weak by nature, and so prone to evil, that we are easily affected by a sinful object when it is presented before us. Hence the necessity of at once resisting when the suggestion is made, lest we be influenced by it. See the contrast, again, between the conduct of our dear Lord, and that of our first parents. At once our Lord casts from Him what the wicked spirit presents. There is no dallying, but the act of rejection is prompt and decisive. But Eve listens: she argues feebly, deliberates upon the object, sees its beauty, dwells upon it with pleasure, and the act of disobedience speedily follows. *And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold; and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband, who did eat.*[2] It is at this stage in temptation that vigour, promptitude, and an unhesitating turning away of the soul from the object are so imperatively demanded. The pleasure and delight may be either material or formal. It is material when it affects us externally, tells upon our senses, or imagination, almost in spite of ourselves, but yet has not begun to gain the assent of our mind. But when the

[2] Gen. iii. 6.

mind deliberately takes the pleasure, and dwells upon it, and knowingly allows it to influence the soul in a forbidden direction, there is formal delight, the commencement of sin, and a greatness of sin in proportion to the deliberateness. A man may accidentally meet a neighbour, against whom he may have some cause of displeasure, and towards whom he may be moved by feelings of vindictiveness. The case once arose in the instance of one of the canonised Saints of the Church, St. John Gualbert. His brother had been murdered by one of his acquaintances; and on a Good Friday, the Saint, who had not yet overcome his natural feelings of bitter resentment, accidentally met the murderer face to face. His first feeling was to take instant and extreme revenge, by demanding life for life. But a higher principle was brought to bear upon him. He was reminded of the day on which his Lord, dying on the cross, forgave His enemies; and, instead of giving formal assent to the feeling of revenge, which the object had excited, he repelled all ideas of vindictiveness, embraced his enemy, and begged his prayers for a perfect pardon of whatever sin he might have committed in the imperfection of his charity. Here is a point on which very much, perhaps everything depends, as to merit in resisting temptation, or as to guilt in yielding under it. And to this we shall also have to return, in the further practical considerations upon which we shall have in a few moments to enter.

The last stage in a temptation which issues in sin is consent. This implies that exercise of our will, by which, when we know that an act is sinful, we do the act either in reality or desire. We give ourselves up to the power which is alluring us, and knowingly yield to its influence. After the suggestion made to our first parents by the serpent, delight and pleasure succeeded; then followed full deliberation, and a consent manifested by the act: they took the fruit and did eat. The heart is the seat of the will; and the fact of giving free and willing consent to what is sinful implies, therefore, the giving up of the heart to an object which is opposed to God. It is of the heart of man that God is so desirous and so jealous: He asks us to give Him our heart: He commands us to love Him with our whole heart; and it is in this dreadful act of turning the heart from God, and attaching it to an object which He condemns and forbids, that the malice of sin consists. God sees the heart and knows its working. He sees and loves it, when it is drawn and turned towards Himself, and clings to Him with a loyal and an earnest love. He sees and condemns it, when He finds it attracted away from Him by an unworthy object, which is balanced against Him and preferred

before Him. Such a turning away of the Sacred Heart of our Blessed Lord from the Will of His Father was impossible. *I always do what is pleasing to Him*[3] was His motto; and He carried it out faithfully in His temptation in the desert. No delight, no consent followed upon the suggestion of the evil one. Such are the stages of temptation. Look back upon your own conduct, and see whether what St. Gregory says may not have been true sometimes in your case: that delight and consent have succeeded to the representation of evil which has been brought before you. Look forward, also, to the future; and be very careful how you act when temptation may again assail you. Think of the example of your dear Lord, and with earnest and decisive promptitude reject sin on its very first approach. The suggestion you may not be able to prevent: delight you can resist; and consent will not follow when you shut up your heart against forbidden pleasure. God will watch the issue; but He will not be wanting with His help, and you will find the truth of what the Apostle says: *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue that you may be able to bear it.*[4]

II. One very important and essential matter to attend to on the question of temptation, is the necessity of avoiding occasions of sin. In attending to this matter, we shall find room for still further applying in a practical manner, what we have said from St. Gregory upon the three stages in temptation. What we mean by an occasion of sin is some external circumstance in which an allurement to sin is likely to arise. Evil company, for instance, is an occasion of sin, for it is proverbial how much we are likely to be influenced in our character and conduct by those with whom we associate. Places, in which we have reason to believe that danger may arise to our virtue, are occasions. Reading of an immoral or infidel tendency is an occasion, and one with regard to which in these days of facility and encouragement for reading, we must be especially cautious. For in all these there is found an allurement to sin. Evil is suggested: the suggestion may be entertained and delighted in: consent may follow; and thus occasions of sin may lead to the completion of the three stages of temptation, and to the commission of deliberate sin. Hence arises the necessity of avoiding the occasions of sin.

As an occasion of sin implies some external circumstance which may lead to the commission of sin, it follows that those occasions are most to be avoided in which sin is most likely to be committed. Some occasions are immediately connected with

[3] John viii. 29. [4] 1 Cor. x. 13.

sin, others more remotely. The former, which are called *proximate* occasions, are those circumstances in which there is every likelihood that sin will follow: the latter, which are called *remote* occasions, are those in which sin more probably may not be committed. Going into bad company, in which sin has been again and again committed by any person, is to such a person an immediate and proximate occasion. The sin is sure to be suggested: the company is itself a suggestion; most probably pleasure and delectation will ensue; and with equal probability consent will be the consequence. As the occasion, therefore, thus leads to sin, it must be avoided; and it is in itself sinful to expose oneself willingly to such a danger. It is quite intelligible that what is a proximate occasion to one person, may be a very remote occasion, or no occasion whatever, to another. To an habitual drunkard, joining a drinking company in a public house, in every probability will open the way to sin. To another person who has never sinned in that degrading way, who has no tendency to such a habit, or who may be called in by necessity or by duty, the circumstance may not be in the least suggestive of sin; and to him the obligation of avoiding it may not exist at all. Each one's experience and conscience will easily and instinctively tell him what is to him an occasion of sin; and as natural instinct will caution us against touching fire because it will burn us, hatred and fear of sin will caution us against every circumstance which will spiritually injure us, or lead us into danger.

Our own weakness, and the power and persistency of our three spiritual enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh, combine together in dictating that prudent avoidance of occasions of sin, which is certainly the best evidence of Christian valour. To expose ourselves unnecessarily to danger is never a sign of courage, but it is a proof of rashness and folly. Would you drink a vessel of poison, being willing to run the risk that you may perhaps escape without harm? Would you go through a forest in which you know that robbers are lying in wait for you, and comfort yourself with the thought that perhaps they may not molest you? Or would you go and take up your abode in a plague-stricken city, in which hundreds are dying every day, if stern necessity or duty did not impel you, and think that you could keep well and happy in the midst of the desolation around you? Whoever would do such things as these might be notable for other qualities, but discretion would not be a feature in his character. It is true that the grace of God is powerful enough to enable us to conquer any temptation, but it does not attend upon those who run away from its protection, and expose themselves

heedlessly to danger. St. Peter was supported by Grace when he nobly answered the princes and rulers of Jerusalem that he must obey God rather than man, and later still when he submitted to be crucified for the faith under the Emperor Nero; but he was abandoned to his own weakness, and fell into sin, when he rashly threw himself into the company of servants and loiterers in the court of the house of Caiphas.

The Sacred Scriptures are full of warnings, in word and in example, against exposing oneself to the danger of sin. *My son*, says the Wise man, *if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them. If they shall say: Come with us . . cast in thy lot with us, walk not thou with them, restrain thy foot from their paths.*[5] And elsewhere he gives that well-known maxim: *He that loveth the danger shall perish in it.*[6] And St. Paul reminds us of our duty in this regard when he says: *Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall.*[7] Look at the instance of King David, one so favoured and loved by God, how in a moment of danger he cast not off the suggestion of evil, but took delight, gave consent, and Oh! so miserably degraded himself! Well might he say, when in the days of his penitence he was crying out for pardon: *I am become miserable, and am bowed down even to the end: I walked sorrowful all the day long.*[8] Look at Solomon, so wise and so good a teacher, who, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, spoke those words of caution which we have just cited: would that he had practised himself what he had taught to others! and his end would not have been buried in the gloom in which it is now shrouded. God had cautioned the Israelites against associating with the Gentiles; *for they will most certainly*, He said, *turn away your heart to follow their gods. And to these Solomon was joined by a most ardent love. And when he was now old, his heart was turned away by women to follow strange gods.*[9] When inspired and highly-privileged Kings and Prophets have fallen, because they exposed themselves to dangerous occasions, what are we to think of ourselves, and how can we expect an exemption which was not granted to them? In the temptations to which our dear Lord was subjected, it was not He who sought the Tempter, it was the Tempter who came to seek Him in the solitude and security of the desert.

When we pray, according to our Lord's instruction and command, that God would not *lead us into temptation*, we pray that we may be kept from occasions which would draw us into sin; and therefore we should be contradicting the spirit of this prayer,

[5] Prov. i. 10, 15. [6] Ecclus. iii. 27. [7] 1 Cor. x. 12.
[8] Ps. xxxvii. [9] 3 Kings xi. 2, 4.

—we should be doing one thing and asking Almighty God to do another in our regard,—if we deliberately put ourselves in the way of temptation. St. Philip Neri used to say that our duty is not so much to avoid sin, as to avoid the occasions of sin. And this, you will observe, is the promise you make to God, when in your act of Contrition you ask for pardon for past sins, and declare, with regard to the future, that you 'will carefully avoid all the occasions of sin.' See the sad catalogue of evils which are apt to arise when an occasion is voluntarily sought or accepted. The occasion leads to suggestion, suggestion to delectation, delectation to consent, consent to actual commission; acts lead to habits, habits to obstinacy, obstinacy issues in a kind of feeling of necessity of sinning and impossibility of helping it; then comes final impenitence, despair, death in a state of mortal sin, and the eternal loss of the soul. All this, because occasions are not avoided.

What, then, is our duty with regard to temptation? We must *watch:* that is to say, we must be upon our guard, and not allow ourselves to be led into any occasion which, in our case, is proximately connected with sin. We must *fly* from an occasion, when we find that, not having sought it, it may happen to arise. We must *pray*, and thus bring God to our help and His Holy Angels to shield us. We must *frequent the Sacraments;* for these are channels of Grace: they diminish the force of concupiscence, increase our union with God, and therefore our separation from sin. The practice of *acts of self-denial*, especially such as are imposed upon us during the holy time of Lent, is a great help towards conquering in the time of temptation; for such acts prove that we are in earnest: they enable us to subjugate nature, and thus weaken one fertile source of temptation. And one most important matter to attend to, is *prompt resistance at the beginning*. The moment any suggestion of evil arises, it ought to be at once crushed: there should be no dallying with what we ought to fear and hate. St. Cyprian says, that no one can be safe for any length of time when close to danger; and as we immediately shrink back the moment fire scorches us, we ought at once to recoil when the presence of evil is felt. The recollection of the *Presence of God*, of the *great truths of Eternity*, of the horrible *deformity of sin*, will always serve as a secure defence. Such thoughts will enable us to live in closer union with the supernatural world, and in the time of trial we shall be less likely to be affected by the low and unworthy feelings of corrupt nature.

Be prudent, my dear brethren, but be brave in the contest upon which you have entered; for life implies a constant suc-

cession of temptations. *Man's life upon earth is a warfare*;[10] and it is in accordance with God's will and Providence that it is so. We are in a state of probation, and temptation is implied in this state. We might wish to be kept for ever free from every attack, but this is an idle wish. We are members of a militant Church, and each of us must be ready to take our part in the conflict which is ever going on. Though God loves us, He allows us to be tried, in order that we may have occasions for merit, and may deserve the reward of victory. To each of us He says, what through His Angel He said to the faithful patriarch Tobias : *Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee.*[11] You are not alone in the struggle : God and His Angels are standing by, and are on your side. Those faithful spirits who came to minister to our dear Lord after His victory, will, after your contest, come and minister to you. And your blessing will be that pronounced upon every true and loyal soldier of Christ by the Apostle St. James : *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him.*[12]

[10] Job. vii. 1. [11] Tobias xii. 13. [12] James i. 12.

SERMON XXI.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

OUR BLESSED LORD'S TRANSFIGURATION.

He was transfigured before them.

How different is the event in the life of our Blessed Lord, recorded in the Gospel of this Sunday, from that which, on Sunday last, we were called upon to contemplate! Then we saw Him in what we can scarcely help feeling was a humiliating state; because, in our own regard at least, we so oftentimes feel that temptation is humiliating. Then He was in the company of the evil spirit, who was trying to bring sin even upon the all-holy One; but to-day He is brought before us in company with two of the great Saints of the Old Testament—Moses the Lawgiver of Israel, and Elias a specially privileged Prophet; and He becomes an object of admiration to three of His favoured Apostles. Then it was a struggle, though it resulted in victory: to-day all is peace and glory; and we are invited to contemplate an event, which stands alone among all the events of His sacred Life, unaccompanied with sorrow or humiliation. The Transfiguration is a striking and a mysterious event: *striking*, because so singular and unusual. His sorrows are everywhere recorded: His glory everywhere shrouded in the Gospel. And it is a *mysterious* event. There is such a secrecy about it: such a desire upon the part of our Lord, that nothing should be known about it by others than its witnesses, at least during His lifetime. But the event has been recorded. The secret was faithfully kept, as SS. Mark and Luke tell us,[1] until after the Resurrection. Now it is written down for our instruction. It is related by three of the Evangelists; and St. Peter, in his second Epistle,[2] refers to it as an argument in favour of the Divinity of our Lord, and as an encouragement to the faith and life of Christians.

The Church must have an object in selecting this fact for our instruction on this second Sunday of Lent. What is this object?

[1] Mark ix. 9; Luke ix. 36. [2] 2 Pet. i. 17.

We are not to take to-day's Gospel by itself, but must view it in relationship to the Gospel of last Sunday, and in connexion with the early days of Lent which we are still passing. Placed side by side with the history of the Temptation, the Transfiguration comes before us as an act of compensation to the sacred Humanity: it is an illustration of the principle so often affirmed with regard to God's dealings, that, after suffering and humiliation, glory follows. And as on the first Sunday of Lent, the solitude of our Blessed Lord in the desert, and His conquest of the evil spirit, is brought before us, to instruct and encourage us in our spiritual conflict, so on the second Sunday a glimpse of our own future glory, and the reward in store for us, is held up to our view, in order that we may remember that God will be sure to bless our penitential works, and that He will not fail in the midst of their performance to visit us with consolations, and thus encourage us to pursue steadily to the end what has been undertaken in obedience to His own command, and is being continued under His protecting care.

Let us study, then, to-day the lessons suggested by the Transfiguration, and apply them for our good. We will consider it in reference to our Blessed Lord, to His Church, and to ourselves.

I. The Transfiguration, by which is meant a complete change in the whole outward appearance of our Lord, is an exceptional recorded fact in His life. Ordinarily, it is His Humanity which is presented to us, just as it was to those who saw Him in the Flesh. He became Man in very deed, not in appearance only, as some early heretics taught;[3] and especially in the first three Gospels, we have the fact of His Humanity very prominently placed before us. *Et Homo factus est*, is an article of the Creed which certainly the Gospels do not conceal. But yet, as in Christ both natures existed, the Divine and the Human, we might have expected, perhaps, that the Divine Nature would manifest itself more strikingly and more frequently. As He is God, equal to His Father, *the brightness of His Glory and the figure of His Substance*,[4] why should not the splendour which He concealed burst forth, now and then through the veil which concealed it, and assert the majesty of the Only-begotten One? We might have thought that as with ourselves, notwithstanding the restraint we put upon our passions, and the efforts we make towards acquiring that self-command which keeps lower feelings in submission to higher principles, from time to time poor human nature will break out and manifest its existence, and prove that it is not yet utterly subdued, so in Him would the Divine Nature burst through the trammels of

[3] Principally the *Docetæ*: vide Perrone, de Incarnatione, pars ii. cap. ii.
[4] Heb. i. 3.

humanity, as Samson *broke his bonds like threads of web*,[5] and assert its presence and its claims. We might also perhaps be inclined to ask, if belief in our Lord's Divinity is essential to salvation, and if the object of His teaching and His miracles was to establish this truth, why should He have so sedulously concealed what, by an act of Transfiguration, He might at any time have displayed, and make Faith such an effort, when it might have been made so easy?

For it is the case that the weakness of the Humanity is always before us in the Gospel history, and the Glory of the Divinity so mysteriously concealed. In Bethlehem, in Egypt, in Nazareth, in His intercourse with the people of Jerusalem, in His temptation in the desert, in His attitude before His enemies, in the humiliation of Calvary, *Ecce Homo*, behold a Man before you. In His Transfiguration, indeed, we have His higher Nature in some way exhibited, but only on one recorded occasion. He may have been transfigured more frequently; for St. John reminds us how very few of His signs are written down; and we have the authority of a Father of the Church, Origen,[6] in support of a tradition, that our blessed Lord was transfigured several times in the presence of those who were worthy of thus seeing Him, or whom He may have wished to awe on special occasions. His Mother and St. Joseph may have seen in the Hidden Life, what the three Apostles saw on the mountain; not improbably, the Magi saw the same at the Epiphany: and when His enemies at their first coming up to seize Him, after another kind of Transfiguration in Gethsemani, were hurled down at His declaring Himself, in the words, *I am*, some manifestation of the Divinity, of which those words are an affirmation, seems to have been made then. But still, it is true that, as an explicitly recorded fact, the event of to-day's Gospel stands alone.

His Divinity He did manifest, indeed, and quite sufficiently by His miracles, and by His teaching, for He proved the truth of His doctrine by the exalted holiness of His life. And as that greatest truth was to be the object of the faith of His followers, He would not force it upon them, except by such evidences as would make their faith meritorious. For in the revelations which he makes to us, God allows them to be attended with sufficient evidence to gain the faith and acceptance of those that are willing to believe, He does not force them upon the conviction of the ill-disposed.[7] Objects of faith are not the same as objects of sense, by which the willing and unwilling may each be equally

[5] Judges xvi. 12.
[6] Apud Morris, *Jesus the Son of Mary*, vol. i. p. 422. [7] Pascal.

influenced. He proved His Divinity by works and signs, which did gain Him many followers, but which at the same time were misinterpreted and perverted to their own ruin by those who attributed them to the evil spirit, and even made them a cause for bringing about His death. So it was not by acts of Transfiguration, repeated before those who had other sufficient evidence supplied to them, that He intended to give proof of His being the Son of God, and being God, equal to His Father.

Besides, His life was to be an example, and to contain lessons for us to imitate. Where do we find subjects for instruction, and models for imitation, most in what is treasured up for us in the record of that Life? Is it in the facts of His glorified or of His suffering life? Let me put these questions to you. Which teaches you most, His Glory or His Humiliation? The first you cannot attain to; the second, according to the measure in which it may please God to send it upon you, you can bring home to yourself, and make a matter of practical application. Which humbles you most? See what He was, and what He did. So great, and yet He made Himself so lowly: not thinking it robbery to be equal with God, yet taking the form of a servant, and becoming obedient unto death! What are we to think of ourselves when we ponder upon the humility of a God? Which comforts you most? In our own trials and sorrows, which are so frequent, and oftentimes so heavy, is it the glory of our Lord, or His share in our infirmities, which offers us the greater comfort? Remember St. Paul's argument: *We have not a high-priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like ourselves, without sin.*[8] And which attracts you most? You know that our dear Lord invites us to go to Him: *Come to Me, all you that are burdened,*[9] He says. But is it of Thabor, or is it not rather of Calvary He says: *When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to Myself?*[10] Come, He says to us; I am like yourselves, humbled and suffering: Come to Me, and I will refresh and console you. In which, therefore, is it, we may well ask ourselves, that we find the greater help, and the more encouraging instruction? In that which we cannot share, namely, His glory; or in that which is so frequently put before us, namely, His humiliations and sufferings? So, it is not hard for us to understand that it was in accordance with our blessed Lord's will and carrying out the plan He had in view, that He should so often be placed before us humbled, and so seldom transfigured.

II. Now we may take a step in the lessons of the Transfiguration which will bring this mysterious event nearer to ourselves.

[8] Heb. iv. 15. [9] Matt. xi. 28. [10] John xii. 32.

We will consider it in its bearing upon the Church of which we are members, and of which we hope to continue members for ever. We have said that in our blessed Incarnate Lord there were associated in one Person two distinct natures, the Divine and the Human; and that in the Transfiguration the Divine manifested itself in an exceptional mode. In the Church of Christ the two natures have their existence. The Church is a Divine institution: our Lord is always present in it, and the Holy Spirit abides in it for ever. There are promises enregistered, which are unfailing, by which this Divine presence is affirmed, and its continuance is guaranteed. *I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world*.[11] *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of Truth*.[12] In the Church, then, God is ever present, and is ever working; but yet the Church has its human element, for God manifests Himself, not in a glorious mode of operation, but He works through men, whom He makes His ministers, and through whom He labours and teaches.

What is the attitude of the world towards the Church, and how does the Church stand in the eyes of the world? The world is apt to view the Church only in her human aspect. It stands up against the Church: it challenges her, and in its opposition it seems to us to be succeeding in oppressing her, and in paralysing her powers of action. The world forgets or ignores the Divine Presence in the Church, and acts towards her as if she were merely human, and were not inhabited by the Spirit of God. Look around you, and you see this constantly manifested. The Church more frequently stands like our blessed Lord bound before Pilate, than in the outward form, with which He was invested upon Thabor. And it is comforting and reassuring for us to think of this: it prevents our being scandalised when we see the Church oppressed, and its venerable Head, the successor of the Apostle who witnessed the Transfiguration, judged and humbled in the eyes of the world.

Yet there are occasions when the glory of the Church is manifested, and when the world and the opponents of the Church are awed into submission to her claims. Such was the case when, after three hundred years of persecution, the Cross appeared in glory in the heavens to Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, and told him it was in that Sign he was to conquer. Such, too, occurred, when the scourge of God, the devastating barbarian general, Attila the Hunn, encouraged and enriched in his career of conquest, appeared before the walls of Rome, and seemed upon

[11] Matt. xxviii. 20. [12] John xiv. 16.

the point of adding that holy city to the spoils which he had achieved. St. Leo the Great goes forth to meet him, unarmed with earthly weapons, but protected by more powerful defenders, who seem to have manifested themselves to the view of the tyrant, as he at once submitted to their will, and turning back his course, left the city unharmed, and in peace. Such, too, have been the signs which have accompanied the apostolic converters of countries to the faith, when they have gone like lambs into the midst of wolves,—as St. Augustine, of Canterbury, presented himself with the Cross before our Saxon ancestors,—and have gained them to the faith. Such events may be rare, but not more rare in the history of the Church than is the Transfiguration in the history of the Gospel.

Or take the truths which the Church is commissioned to defend and to preach. What is the ground of objection which the world makes to them? They are too mysterious: they are not obvious enough to human reason: there is to the world an external improbability about them; and the world, which has no sympathy and no patience with the supernatural, at once pronounces against and rejects them. How truly does St. Paul say: *The sensual man perceiveth not those things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined.*[13] By way of illustration take the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament. Which does our dear Lord, in this Mystery of Love, most resemble: His humbled, or his glorified and transfigured state? How humble, how silent, how retired, how self-denying is His Hidden Life in this adorable Sacrament! Hidden Life, I say, my dear brethren, for there is nothing of Thabor here: it is Nazareth over again. Although, during this holy time of Lent we are observing so generally the beautiful devotion of the Quarant' Ore, and have then an opportunity of seeing Him enthroned in glory, and like the Apostles we then feel more than ever ravished with love towards our Lord, and cry out: *O Lord, it is good for us to be here;* yet even that is an exceptional state, and by the unbeliever it is not appreciated, and he is unmoved and uninfluenced. But to us which is the greater benefit? Which moves us most to love our Blessed Lord in the Holy Sacrament, His humility or His greatness? If He dwelt amongst us in a glorified form, we might fear Him more, we should not love Him more. We might be more awed, we should not be attracted so much. Does He not here also, by His condescending humility, teach, humble, comfort, and draw us to Himself?

III. Does not the Transfiguration, when placed side by side

[13] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

with the Temptation, bring home lessons also to us of very direct and personal value? If we are inclined to ask, why it is that in our dealings with God and our struggle towards Eternity, so many efforts and sacrifices are demanded of us, we are reminded that we are in a state of probation: we are now to live by faith and hope, for the possession of our reward is not yet vouchsafed to us. If our Blessed Lord was constantly humbled, and only once shown to us in a state of glory, why should we repine, and demand more for ourselves than He accepted for Himself? And yet God is so good and generous, and so eager to reward us, that He anticipates to us from time to time some portion of our reward, and cheers us on by a passing glimpse of our future glory. He does this, when He visits us by sweetnesses and a sense of close union with Him in the time of prayer. If this has not occurred to us, because we have been unworthy of it, at least it has been done to others, who have had purer hearts and a more aspiring love. It occurred to St. Paul, when he was raised to the third heaven, and saw the ravishing sight, which he kept secret with the secrecy of the Transfiguration. He does it, when He gives us that peace of conscience, which in its encouraging happiness passes all understanding. He does it especially when in Holy Communion He fills us with Himself, and displaces for the time all other thoughts and anxieties. And even if in prayer we have aridities instead of sweetness, what of that? Our Lord had His aridities in Gethsemani; but He was the same who had been transfigured on Thabor. The same three Apostles witnessed both: and as the glory of one of these scenes served them as a security against being scandalised when they witnessed the humiliation of the other, so may we in times of spiritual trial encourage ourselves by the recollection of past consolations, and never doubt that patience and faithfulness under trial are sure to be rewarded.

If, then, we are to suffer and to do penance, and if Lent reminds us of this; if we are to have many spiritual trials, and but little comfort in the midst of them, we can learn our lesson of comfort from the connexion between the Transfiguration and the Temptation, and hope that, if the latter be illustrated in our case, the former will not be far off. This is only the second Sunday of Lent: it is not yet Easter. We have passed but one quarter of Lent, ten days out of forty; but the view of a reward is given to us, and something like the glory of the Resurrection is held in anticipation before us. If we are partakers of the sufferings of Christ, so shall we also be of His consolation.[14]

And so you see, my dear brethren, how the Church is teaching

[14] 2 Cor. i. 7.

and encouraging us. She wishes us to take the Gospel of this day not by itself, but in association with that of last Sunday, and to view it in the light in which Lent presents it to us. Gladly do we resign ourselves to the trials of the time, such as they are, accept its mortifications, and comply with its duties, notwithstanding the efforts and sacrifices demanded of us. Lent is by no means a gloomy time: it is full of associations of joy. It is a penitential time, but penance undertaken with an obedient and a cheerful spirit is accompanied, like virtue, with its own reward. Something of the joy of the Transfiguration will be given to us over and over again. There are beautiful festivals occurring during the progress of this holy season, which bring joy to us. St. Gregory, our holy Father St. Benedict, St. Joseph the Patron of the Church, the Annuntiation of our Blessed Lady, come to speak to us a word of encouragement, and to give a glimpse of joy and a promise of a share in their reward. Then there are the Devotions by which the week is shorn of all monotony, and the time is made to run cheerfully and almost unconsciously forward. There are the frequent Benedictions of the Blessed Sacrament: is not each of these, like the Transfiguration, a cheering and encouraging display of the love and power of our dear Lord, effected in order to bless us and to urge us on hopefully in our Lenten labours?

And as we gather around the Blessed Sacrament, either in its more solemn exposition, or in the more quiet Benedictions on the various evenings or other occasions of the week, we shall go away cheered and encouraged with the conviction, that the time is to come, of which we then have an anticipation, when every effort will be rewarded, every sacrifice amply and abundantly compensated, every aspiration of the soul fully satisfied by the eternal and certain possession of the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Such is the lesson taught, and such are the graces secured to us, by our Blessed Lord's Transfiguration.

SERMON XXII.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

OBLIGATION OF HEARING THE WORD OF GOD.

Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.

THERE is a very special instructiveness, encouragement, and caution contained in these words of our Blessed Lord, with which the Gospel of this Sunday concludes. The words are instructive, because they teach us a precise and well-defined means of gaining the blessing and approval of Almighty God: encouraging, because we cannot help feeling that the means are really within the reach of every willing soul,—and cautioning, because they imply that if the condition is not fulfilled, the blessing cannot be expected. There is also this practical feature about our Lord's declaration: it points out to us that it is our duty, not to admire perfections which are out of our province or beyond our reach, but to exert ourselves practically about a positive duty which is not only clearly within our power, but which is decidedly demanded of us, and upon which depends everything most important to us. Well indeed might the good woman in the crowd exclaim as she did, when she heard the words of wisdom uttered by our dear Lord, in terms of admiration of the happy Mother of such a Son! But if she did nothing more than that, what could her admiration avail her? As it is not they who say, Lord, Lord! that are to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but they who do the Will of Him whom they pretend to acknowledge, so neither at any time can it avail us to praise merely, where action is required, and to content ourselves with sentiment and speech, when duty demands us to be up and earnest at work.

I. What is meant by *hearing* the Word of God, as a preliminary to keeping it? It must mean something important from the antithesis, and it is given as one of the two conditions here required for gaining God's blessing. It is not they only who *keep* the Word of God, that are blessed; but they who hear it first,

and are then led by hearing to pass on to its observance. The saying of our Lord is thus of very general application. It applies to all who have the opportunity of gaining the instruction which the Word of God conveys to them, and of then carrying into practice what the grace of God through this means suggests as a duty. Almighty God gives to us many ordinary means of grace; and amongst these ordinary means, certainly the benefit of being told what we ought to do, by those whom by a special calling and sacramental ordination He has raised to the office of instructors and guides, is one. We cannot, in many cases, know what is our special duty, unless we are told it; and we cannot expect the voice of instruction to be brought home to us, if we keep ourselves out of its reach, and thus, through our own act and fault, do not hear it. Thus, hearing is a prelude to keeping.

It cannot be doubted that many persons are very lax and easy with themselves upon this point. They bring themselves to think that sermons are of no use to them: that they sanctify the Sunday, and satisfy every obligation, by just hearing one Mass, a low Mass if possible, and then doing nothing else for the profit of their soul upon the day which they are commanded to keep holy. I do not wish to exaggerate obligations, and to create sins where they do not exist. I am not now preaching upon the duty of keeping the Sunday holy; and it would be beside my purpose to explain what is the least that is required of us, to escape grievous sin in connexion with this duty. It may be sufficient only to say here, that accidentally, that is to say in certain circumstances, we may be obliged under the penalty of grievous sin to do something more on a Sunday than hear a low Mass; and by the omission of that something more we may be making ourselves answerable for a mortal sin each time that the omission occurs. It is enough for my purpose to-day, and, my dear brethren, it is the best matter I can place before you, if I show you that the obligation of hearing the Word of God does sometimes form one of these additional duties of the Sunday, and that it is quite possible that this obligation may be grievous, and that consequently its omission may be a mortal sin.

To those who think that the instruction that is given in the Church, and that sermons are of no use to them, a sermon on such a subject is of the greatest service. No one wants a sermon more than one who thinks he does not want it at all; who thinks himself above such a want, and imagines that he is so well instructed and so richly furnished with incentives to duty, that he requires nothing more. Such an one might place himself in the position of the self-satisfied Pharisee, and stand up and thank

God that he is not like the rest of men. In all other matters men do want instruction, and want to be kept up to the time, and to a knowledge and experience as to what ought to be done: but those that we are supposing conceive themselves to be above all this. The great difficulty is to get them to hear anything on the subject; to get them, for instance, to hear what is said now; for on the principle which guides them, when a sermon is preached on the necessity of hearing sermons, they are not present to hear, and so there seems no means of influencing them. Here is one of the dreadful consequences of their mode of acting: they have ears to hear, but they keep out of the reach of the sound, and so they cannot and do not hear. We must only hope that a little may be communicated to them by those who do hear, and that some good may by an accidental and indirect means come down upon them. Let us, however, go into the question; and if all cannot be influenced, perhaps some may be; and a little of that humility and submissiveness to authority, which is so Christian and Catholic, may be evoked by what has to be said upon the importance of hearing the Word of God.

II. It must be remembered that the Church has a divinely-appointed authority to teach us; therefore we are bound by a Divine law to hear the Church in order that we may be informed and instructed in the faith, and in our moral duties. There are many passages in the Sacred Scripture, in which our duty of hearing the instructions given by the Church is urged upon us; passages very familiar to us, but which we are apt perhaps to consider in a controversial sense, and to apply to others, without remembering that they are of very practical applicability to ourselves. *He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me*,[1] is a saying of our Blessed Lord, cited, as you know, in the Catechism, in support of the authority of the Church for making laws which bind those that are members of the Church. And another saying: *If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican*,[2] was used by our Lord when He was enforcing upon those in the Church the observance of a moral duty. And St. Paul's declaration: *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ*,[3] conveys a duty to those in the Church to keep up their faith, as well as to those out of the Church not to refuse obedience to those who come to them with signs of a Divine sanction.

Preaching, upon the part of the ministers of the Church, is not to be considered in the light of a privilege, which gives them a claim to speak, under holy circumstances, to those who are to

[1] Luke x. 16. [2] Matt. xviii. 17. [3] Rom. x. 17.

listen as disciples to a master. It is not a privilege, it is an obligation, and a very serious one. It is not an act which they can either exercise or not, just as it may suit their fancy: it is a duty they are bound, under obedience to the Church, and in accordance with the spirit of their state, to fulfil towards those over whom they hold responsibility, and whose spiritual care is entrusted to them. *Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!*[4] is what each Priest having the care of souls may oftentimes say to himself. And the holy Council of Trent presses on the minds and consciences of the clergy the recollection of this duty, and shows its great importance.[5] This, of course, implies some correlative obligation upon the part of those who are to be preached to; and the anxiety of the Church in urging this work upon her ministers implies her earnest desire that those who are to be preached to should attend, and not allow the Word of God to be spoken fruitlessly. The prophet once complained: *Children have asked for bread, and there was no one to break it to them:*[6] is the reverse to be the case, that bread is broken and handed generously out, but there is no one to receive it, and to value the gift?

Of course, a preacher does not pretend to personal infallibility, or to speak upon his own authority, or under the influence of a special inspiration. 'Men, not Angels are the priests of the Gospel.' But still the preacher, as being a member of the priesthood, is prepared for his office. He is called by God, as Aaron was; a special Sacrament has been instituted in order to invest him with the grace, and character, and power of the priestly office. And as in the Sacraments God uses him as His minister, through whom He conveys the benefit of the Sacrament to him who receives it, so in some manner (not indeed with equal ministerial power) does He, through the means of the teaching of the priests, communicate to us and keep up within us a knowledge of what is demanded of us. If it was true of the priests of the Old Testament, as Almighty God by one of His prophets declares, *the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his hand*,[7] the exalted character of the priesthood of the New Law, the infusion of the Holy Ghost at the time of his ordination, and the sacramental grace and power then communicated to him, give additional weight to this utterance when applied to him, and are evidences of a sanction which attends upon his teaching. Instructions given by priests are certainly the ordinary means by which the faithful learn their duty; and if this ordinary means be neglected, it may not please God to substitute other means, and

[4] 1 Cor. ix. 16.
[5] Præf. Cat. Conc. Trid.
[6] Lam. iv. 4.
[7] Mal. ii. 7.

the ignorance which will be the consequence cannot be otherwise than culpable. One of the greatest sources of anxiety to those who have the care of souls may well be, in regard of those who will not come to hear the word of God, when addressed to them under the sacred circumstances which attend its delivery in the Church. The priest has a chance of influencing those to whom, in the fulness of his heart and with a deep sense of his responsibility, he is able to speak upon the doctrines of the Church or the great truths of Eternity. But very frequently no other chance is afforded him of bringing before them a sense of the state of indolence and negligence into which they may have fallen, and of exciting them to amendment and fervour.

You know, my dear brethren, that out of the Catholic Church, especially amongst those in whose society we are living and with whom we are in constant intercourse, preaching is a great weapon used for the propagation of false doctrine, and for creating and sustaining those powerful prejudices against the Church, which animate the majority of our neighbours. This is the reason which is given in the beginning of the Catechism of the Council of Trent[8] for impressing with unusual earnestness the necessity of assiduous preaching upon the ministers of the Church. To a certain extent those that are opposed to us have advantages over us in this matter. They have not the same amount or kind of missionary labour: their ministrations amongst the sick and the poor are habitually far less than ours; and the work of the Confessional, which oftentimes makes a great demand upon the time of a priest, is to them unknown; and therefore they have the opportunity of devoting themselves more exclusively to the work of preaching, and of influencing by this means those who are under their charge. I know that we have far richer blessings to give you than those we can give when addressing you in our own feeble language, and that they that are external to the Church are deprived of the treasures which the heavy labours of the priesthood are bestowing upon you. But if you allow those with whom you are in daily contact, and by whom you are likely in some way or another to be influenced, to be provided with arguments which they may use against you, and your own principles are not clearly established, just because you refuse instruction when it is offered to you, you are endangering your faith and your morality; you are likely to begin to give in to maxims of false liberalism: to assent to suggestions of disloyalty to the Church and the Holy Father; and all this through your own fault and wilful ignorance.

[8] Loc. cit.

III. Let me now, in further pressing of your duty upon this point, give you additional reasons to induce you to love the Word of God, as a prelude towards keeping it. I said at the beginning that I was not anxious to exaggerate obligations, and to be imposing upon you, as of grievous necessity, the duty of assisting at sermons upon the Sunday. But it is hard to describe in mild terms the conduct of those who habitually neglect this duty, and satisfy themselves with what they conceive will each Sunday keep them just clear of mortal sin. The Church never will have reason to be proud of such children: she will have great reason to fear for them, and in a time of struggle she will almost surely have to weep over the disgrace they will bring upon the religion which they pretend to profess. Why did Almighty God command the Sabbath-day to be kept holy, if a few minutes of the day set apart for the shortest possible form of His worship will suffice? If such advisers had been by His side when He was legislating through Moses—(pardon me, my dear brethren, if the thought seem in the least degree swerving from that profound spirit of adoring respect with which His commandments must ever fill our hearts)—they might be conceived as suggesting that the commandment should not be: Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day; but: Remember that on each Sabbath-day thou keep one half hour holy! It seems hard to have to say this, my dear brethren, but what a pity it should be forced upon us by those who seem to think it and to mean it!

Again: the preaching of the Word of God is one of the uses for which our churches are consecrated and set apart for the service of God. You know how our Blessed Lord availed Himself of the Temple for this purpose. See Him in His boyhood, anticipating, at that early age, the work which was to engage Him so constantly in the days of His missionary life: *They found Him in the Temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions.*[9] And when asked by His holy Mother why He had given them such anxiety by His absence, do you not remember that He answered that He had been thus engaged about His Father's work? And so we read constantly of His being in the Temple; and one Evangelist tells us He was there engaged every day in that work of His Father: *and He was daily teaching in the Temple.*[10] Although preaching is not the holiest work for which a church is built and dedicated to the service of God, for the Sacrifice of the Mass claims excellence over every other use of the house of God, yet undoubtedly the Word of God cannot be communicated to the faithful under holier circumstances,

[9] Luke ii. 46. [10] Ibid. xix. 47.

or with a surer pledge of its producing fruit, than when He who has commissioned His Ministers to preach in His Name, is Himself present, enriching with His own blessing those who listen with docility to the lessons which are imparted to them. There is a literal truth on such occasions in the words of our Blessed Lord: *Where there are two or three gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.*[11]

The nature of the truths, too, which are taught in the house of God, shows the importance and the practical value of hearing the Word of God. There is a great body of doctrinal and moral truths committed to the Church, which she through her ministers communicates to the faithful, in order that they may be rescued from that ignorance and concupiscence, against which it is the duty of the Christian to be guarded and well armed. Take, first of all, doctrinal truths. Who is there that can pretend that he is so fully instructed in all these truths, that he wants nothing more for his own information, and especially that he may be able in the mixed society into which we are thrown, to give a reason to others of the faith and hope that are in him? If instruction on the same truths is given over and over again, it has this advantage, that the truths are better known, can be more fully understood, and more effectually defended against all gainsayers. We have no new truths to communicate, for all our doctrines are as old as the time of the Apostles; but in defence against new objections we may require a new way of putting an old truth, and new arguments to support it. There can be no doubt that more precise and full knowledge of Catholic truth is demanded in this inquiring and sceptical age; and if we remain in ignorance, wilfully brought upon ourselves by negligence on the point on which I am now warning you, our faith may be sorely tried and our allegiance to the Church be in danger of wavering. Just as much as in the Apostles' days are we to remember, how our Blessed Lord has furnished His Church with safeguards against the perils of the time, and that *pastors and teachers* are provided in order *that we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive.*[12]

And take next the many moral truths which it is essential for us to know, in order that we may do our duty as good Christians, and be showing by our conduct that our faith is not dead, but is living, by good works. There are the commandments of God and the Church, in the explanation of which, though we mayhave a general knowledge of what they command and forbid, we may

[11] Matt. xviii. 20. [12] Eph. iv. 14.

have very many matters brought home to us, on which perhaps we have thought but little, and have never examined our conscience. There are sins against which we may require to be especially cautioned : virtues, in regard to which we have never exerted ourselves, and yet which are of great obligation : duties which belong to our particular state of life, on which we shall be examined at the time of our future judgment, though at present their necessity may seldom occur to us. There are the Sacraments, those great realities of the life of a Catholic, to which we may oftentimes, unhappily, require to be urged to approach, and respecting which we have need to be so circumspect in our manner of dealing with them. You may think you know all this ; and yet, allow me to say it, the best instructed and the most perfect amongst you have a great deal to learn, and stand in need of being enlightened again and again. Let me ask you, have you ever heard a sermon on the Love of God, which has not suggested acts of love to you, and has moved you to feel how great your love ought to be, but how miserably little it is? Or upon Pride, that dreadful sin, the root of so many evils, without the thought arising, that it is the real cause of the self-satisfaction felt by those who think they need no church nor pastor to instruct or guide them? Or upon the Forgiveness of injuries, and practical charity to your neighbour, which has not made you fear to say the Lord's Prayer in your imperfect state, lest when you ask for forgiveness of God on the condition therein expressed, you may be calling upon yourself punishment instead of pardon? I need not multiply instances ; but I may only add, that the sermon you are now hearing, may perhaps make you reproach yourself for having often treated the Word of God with but too little respect.

I may further illustrate the great advantage which we may derive from hearing the truths of Religion brought home to us, by reminding you of a spiritual exercise, to which undoubtedly you have very often been invited, and which, even if you have not practised it yourself, you must know is of such prominent importance : I allude to the work of Meditation. What is it that is done in this exercise upon which Saints have engaged themselves, and which is so intimately associated with progress in spiritual perfection? In the practice of Meditation we are not devoting ourselves to the learning and acquisition of new truths. We ponder upon old truths, and ponder upon them again and again. We revolve them frequently in our minds : we make acts and form resolutions upon them ; and thus make them enter into our life, and furnish us with principles of conduct, and store our souls with holy thoughts, in such way that the supernatural is ever existing

about us, and we feel that we are living not so much in this world, as in connexion with that higher order of realities, which is so little recognised by those who never meditate. In like manner, the frequent hearing of the same old truths must be good, as it serves very effectually to counteract worldly principles, which assuredly are pressed with unwearying repetition.

Do, my dear brethren, bear with me, if I now, before I end, ask you to give the true and honest reasons which keep people away from hearing the Word of God. Be truthful: do not flatter yourselves, and tell me whether I am not very near the truth, even if I do not express it adequately, when I state that the reasons are two: Pride and Indolence. First as to Pride. What is the reason often given by those who rather boast about their aversion for sermons, and their habit of keeping away from them? Sermons, they say, are all very well for the poor and for children; but higher and more educated persons do not stand in need of them. Poor and children! And is it really consistent with the character of a Christian to place himself in a different category from the poor and children? I thought both of these were the especial favourites of our Blessed Lord, and that He used to say it would be well for us, if we hoped to enter into Heaven, to cast our lot in with them, and to become such as they are. There is really a latent principle of heresy in such a pretext: there is an unwillingness to be taught: there is a preference given to private judgment and to self-instruction, over submission to authority, and that docility which is essentially Catholic. Next as to Indolence. I have alluded to this already, when I stated the free-and-easy manner in which such self-satisfied persons limit their Sunday's devotions to the narrowest possible dimensions. They say that they can read books of instruction at home, which can more than supply what they hear in a sermon. They *can:* but *do* they? Reading now-a-days is rather a dangerous occupation; for out of a thousand works which are brought in our way, perhaps there is scarcely one that helps us in faith and morality. This pretence of reading at home is but an excuse for staying away from the instructions given by the pastor; and, just like the pretext of Pride, it implies the false principle of teaching oneself instead of learning from the voice of the Church. Remember, the blessing is given to those who *hear* the Word of God, not to those pretended readers.

How can I tell you, without seemingly exaggerating, what the consequences may be of your neglect of the duty which I am urging upon you? You may have to answer before the Judgment-seat of God for sins and ignorances, which have been the conse-

quence of your unwillingness to listen to those who, whatever may be their human character, have been appointed to make known to you the truths of Religion and the duties of your state. It may be that on one or more of those many days in which Pride and Indolence have kept you comfortably at home, whilst others were listening to the Word of God, and were gaining blessings for hearing it, something was said which would have struck even you, and which might have opened your eyes to a truth which most deeply concerned you. And if, when Almighty God charges you on that day with slighted graces, neglected obligations, ignorance of truths which you ought to know, and the indulgence of habits which are sinful, you should dare to allege want of knowledge or deliberateness as an excuse, God will answer: You neglected the ordinary means of learning and of being warned as to your duty. You would not hear My Word when My own Ministers spoke in My Name; and your ignorance has been wilful and is the cause of your punishment. It is the case, my dear brethren, that many have owed their conversion to what they have heard in a sermon. St. Francis of Assisium was by this means led to leave the world and embrace his life of poverty. Before him St. Anthony, by the same means, was led off to his life of perfection. St. Andrew Avellino, in like manner, was thus moved to leave the world and embrace the religious state. So much did St. Theresa value the power of preaching, that she used to say she wished she could get all the world together, that she might be allowed to preach them a sermon upon the duty of Prayer, in order to draw them to its practice. Elsewhere you hear too much of vanity and idle talk. Be glad, then, whenever you can, to have an antidote supplied by what you hear in the house of God.

Bear in mind how hearing the Word of God and keeping it are associated in the words of our text, and that the blessing is attached to the joint duty. You are not likely to be a lover and a faithful keeper, if you do not hear; and thus you will be sacrificing God's blessing. This blessing you want, for it is everything to you. It will make you increase and multiply in grace and merits: it will secure the forgiveness of your sins, strength under temptation, faithfulness in duty, and perseverance in good. Hear the Word of God, then, and keep it. This is the condition to which such rich consequences are attached. Fulfil the condition, and you will gain the blessing.

SERMON XXIII.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

THE DUTY OF HOLY COMMUNION.

The Pasch was near; . . . and when Jesus had lifted up His eyes and saw that a very great multitude cometh to Him, He said . . . Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

THE anxiety expressed by our Blessed Lord in to-day's Gospel, when He saw a great multitude about Him, and He was filled with sympathy lest they should faint before they reached their homes, is felt very keenly by the Church at this time. For she is looking round upon the great numbers who ought to be now preparing for their Easter Communion, and she is filled with solicitude as to the manner in which she can most effectually secure a worthy and faithful compliance with that essential duty. We have now completed one half of the holy time of Lent, and the Pasch is near, as it was when the event of the multiplication of the loaves occurred. And we may well see that our good and watchful Mother the Church, in selecting the record of that miracle for our instruction to-day, has the same mind as our dear Lord had when He achieved it. He intended the miracle, as He showed by the beautiful discourse which followed so soon after it, to serve as a forewarning of another and a greater miracle He was one day to perform, in connexion also with the time of the Pasch, when He was to take bread, and to bless it, and to break it, and to change it into His own Body, and to give His Flesh as food for the life of the world. So is the Church, now that the obligation of the Paschal Communion is upon us, most instant in pressing upon her children an obedience to her most solemn and imperative command, by which their loyalty to herself and their orthodoxy to the faith are to be shown and to be tested.

Looking, then, to the responsible charge laid upon her, she expresses the anxiety which fills her. She looks upon the souls entrusted to her, and with a keen sense of their value, their destiny, their danger, and the long and still uncertain way before them, as they have to be journeying on towards their true and eternal

home, she wants to know what she is to do to save them, what helps she can afford them, and exclaims : Whence can we get bread to feed them ? And as He knew, when He asked the question, what He was about to do, so does she know what a powerful resource she has at hand, and she is determined to apply it. She looks towards the Blessed Sacrament ; and there she knows she has the Bread of the strong, the Bread which infuses strength, and of which they who eat shall live for ever. At other times she urges the duty and the practice of Holy Communion ; but, alas, perhaps, with little effect. She tells of the sweetness of this Food ; but some will not partake of It, and so they know it not. She tells of the blessings which attend a frequent reception of It ; but, alas, there are, even amongst Christians, cold hearts, and they are not drawn. But now, it is not a question of devotion merely—it is a question of life or death ; and they who at other times are ungenerous, now at least must be just : they must be just to themselves, and they must be just to the Church, which imposes her laws upon them.

To-day, my dear brethren, I am to speak to you upon the duty and the necessity of Holy Communion, especially of the Easter Communion. I am not going to speak directly upon Love and Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, though I cannot avoid touching upon such a welcome task ; but I must make that secondary. My first and prominent object is forced upon me by the exigency of the time in which we are engaged, and by the exigency of persons with whom we have to deal. The time is defined and strictly prescribed ; and there are persons upon whom it is necessary to impress the fact, that during this time it is not a matter of choice, whether or no they will approach to Holy Communion, in order that they may be drawn to a closer union with their dear Lord, but a matter of necessity whether they will remain in company with Him, or break with Him altogether, and no longer be reckoned among His children.

I. First of all, my dear brethren, let me ask you whether it does not seem astonishing that the Church should be obliged to legislate upon the duty of approaching to Holy Communion, and that in her legislation she should further find the necessity of having recourse to compulsion, under such severe penalties as excommunication with all its dreadful consequences. Here is what a Catholic believes. He believes that in receiving Holy Communion, our dearest Lord, so merciful, so good, so loving, comes to him, abides within him, takes possession of him, and forms with him at the time an union more real and intimate, than any friendship can desire, or any natural love could possibly effect.

And He that enters within us, and places His Sacred Heart close to our own, is not a God of fear, who would wish to keep us from Him, but the God of Love, who desires to draw us to Him. This is what a Catholic knows and believes; and is it not wonderful that, for those who do know and believe this—not for others, but for them—a law should exist which compels them, at least once in the year, to accept such a blessing? Think upon this: reason upon what your faith tells you; and answer whether it is not astonishing that there are some upon whom the law has to be pressed, and that the alternative has to be held before them: Either Holy Communion with all its richest blessings, or separation from the Church with all its attendant evils!

The law of the Church regarding Easter Communion being an affirmative law, the time for its obligation requires to be definitively prescribed; otherwise the obligation remaining vague and indefinite, it would be the case, that those who have to be compelled to satisfy the law within the limited time, would in every probability continue their procrastination, and abstain altogether from the fulfilment of such a holy duty. Proverbially, what may be done at any time, is often never done at all. And so the Church, for the good of these ungenerous souls, takes up the matter, and prescribes certain limits of time within which the annual Communion must be made. The time is connected with the holy season at which our dear Lord instituted the Sacrament of Love, and so it is called the Paschal Communion. The whole of the time of Lent is now usually included, so that from Ash Wednesday until Low Sunday extends the period during which this law is to be obeyed. And as we are now just in the middle of this period, it is fitting that the voice of warning should go forth, and that those who are ungenerous enough to require compulsion for the performance of a duty which ought to be so welcome to them, should hear the warning, and prepare to obey it.

It ought not to be necessary, although urging obedience to a compulsory law, to press those lower considerations of fear, and to hold out the view of the consequences of disobedience. It is not through severity, but it is through love for you, and with an eager desire for your salvation, that the Church insists upon this fulfilment of your Easter duties. She knows the motive of love which animated our Blessed Lord in instituting all the Sacraments, and of that greatest love which made Him leave Himself as our Food in the Adorable Sacrament of His Body and Blood. She knows the value of Grace, which, through the means of these Sacraments, is conveyed to our souls. She knows and reminds us of the necessity of our coöperating with grace, in order that it may pro-

duce its rich effects within our souls. She knows, too, how forgetful and negligent many of her children would be of their dearest and most sacred interests, if she did not, even by a stringent law, enforce the obligation of approaching, at a fixed period, to these sources of grace. Therefore it is that, like the master of the feast in the parable, she sends out her ministers to compel a compliance with her summons to come to the banquet which has been so generously prepared,

Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you,[1] is a sufficient and most solemn declaration of the necessity of approaching to Holy Communion. The Church, therefore, in her watchfulness, wishes to adopt the means of preserving our spiritual life, and holds before us this Food of our souls. Do not refuse It; for your life depends upon It. Nothing else can supply the want; for God does not bring by extraordinary means, helps for which He has supplied ordinary sources in such abundance. Do remember what you are doing, when by disobedience and non-compliance you bring death upon your soul, by separating yourself from the Church. To be out of the Church is to be severed from all that is holy and comforting: it is to turn away from Heaven, and to be running in that broad road which certainly leads to destruction: it is to sacrifice that sweet Communion of Saints, which imparts so much assistance, through the goodness of those with whom we hold intercourse: it is giving up the protection of the sacred Mother of God, who is the refuge of sinners that run towards her, not the encourager of sinners that turn from her: it is an abandoning of the poor souls in Purgatory, who never stretch out their hands for help towards those who are unwilling to help themselves, and therefore unable to help others. Let not such ones ever boast of being members of the Church, or champions of the Faith! The Church requires no such defenders; and when persecuted and humbled in the eyes of the world, she prefers all her sorrows to the disgrace which would be attached to offers of help, or assurances of sympathy from such ungrateful children. Out of the Church! Let such a thought make you shudder; for to die in that state would entail exclusion from Heaven for all eternity. As we love your souls, which have been bought at so great a Price, we cannot refrain from pressing this duty upon you. It is a voice of warning; but to the wise and prudent a voice of warning never ought to be an unwelcome voice.

II. Let me go a step further; and in pressing the duty of the Holy Communion, do let me remind you of the advantages and

[1] John vi. 54.

rich blessings which attend it. As the effect of food upon the body is, not only that it preserves life, but that it infuses vigour, keeps up its beauty, maintains and increases its strength and power of action; so does the Food of the soul not only just keep up a languishing life within us, but in proportion to the dispositions of obedience, confidence, and love with which we receive It, we shall find It the source of every best blessing. It increases and preserves habitual Grace: It is the source of many actual graces: It draws us to the closest possible union with the Author of Grace, who, at the time of such union, admits us to the privilege of that disciple whom He loved so much, as to allow him to repose upon His Breast at the Last Supper. And as the sun disperses a mist, so does the presence of the Holy One entering into us by the act of Communion, expel from us the stains contracted by many of those minor sins and imperfections to which in daily life we are so liable. It is a great preservative against future sin, by affording an increase of strength in the time of temptation, and by diminishing the power of that concupiscence which, from a too unhappy experience, we find to be the fertile origin of our constant faults.

Nay, more, Holy Communion is to us in two ways a connexion with Heaven, and therefore the Church calls the Blessed Sacrament 'a pledge of future glory.' For, first, it helps us on towards Heaven, and makes the attainment of our eternal reward more easy and secure. *He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood*, says our Blessed Lord, *hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*[2] And, moreover, it is a foretaste of the happiness which is to be ours in that heavenly kingdom; for there we shall possess God, and in Holy Communion we possess Him. And so, what St. Theresa is said to have declared in a vision after her death to one of her nuns, is substantially true of the devout Communicant. 'We in Heaven, and you upon earth, have the same happy work, to be praising God in the presence of God.' For if union with God, and the certain possession of Him ravishes the blessed spirits made perfect in Heaven, our Faith tells us that this same union and possession becomes our happy lot, when our Lord enters within us by Holy Communion.

When we remember, then, that all these advantages, not imaginary, but real and solid, are secured to us by the devout receiving of our dear Lord as the Food of our soul, can we be surprised that our holy Mother the Church, never forgetting what we sometimes too easily forget, and always having before her eyes what we too quickly lose sight of,—the necessity of the graces

[2] John vi. 55.

here so abundantly bestowed upon us,—presses us to the performance of so sacred a duty, and even imposes it upon us by a solemn precept?

And yet, most unfortunately, it is the case that this law, solemn as it is, and so full of consequences, is sometimes demurred to: there are those who do not obey it; and who, of course, throw themselves out of the Church, and bring upon themselves all the spiritual evils of such a dreadful separation. May we not expect Almighty God to exclaim, as He did through His prophet Isaias: *Be astonished, ye heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have brought up children, and have exalted them, but they have despised Me.*[2] For who would not be astonished, that those who profess to believe, should act thus towards such a Mystery of Love? That those who do not believe in the Blessed Sacrament should treat it with disrespect, pains us, but does not so much surprise us: their disrespect follows from their disbelief. But here we have disrespect (because disobedience in this case implies disrespect) from those who declare that they do really and indeed believe in the Catholic doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist. Almighty God, then, may well be astonished, and ask: What more could I do to show My love and goodness? What an answer will those who neglect their Easter duties have to give in Judgment, when this charge will be brought against them! Can ignorance be pleaded? Can it be said that the law was not pressed upon you, and that the ministers of the Church were indifferent as to whether you observed or neglected it? Certainly those who have the care of your souls have much to answer for in connexion with you. But blame them not for silence, when you know that they have spoken, and given you the word of warning, but have spoken and warned in vain!

Our dearest Lord, in this Adorable Sacrament of His Love, may well be astonished also. What has He done, and what is He ever doing, in His silent and patient Sacramental Life? Shorn of every circumstance which can inspire fear, yet He is feared, or certainly is not loved by those who will not come to Him. Here He is holding out His hands all the day long to a people who contradict Him, because in staying away they are opposing His loving designs. He wishes to find a resting-place in the breasts of those whom He loves so tenderly and so constantly; and yet He finds that the world is preferred before Him, and that too, not by unbelievers, remember, but by professed friends and disciples. Is not this one of the greatest difficulties in connexion with this wonderful Mystery, that it is so much avoided by those whose dearest interests are so closely linked with their allegiance

[2] Is. i. 2.

to their Lord, thus dwelling in the midst of them? Tell an infidel nation of this fact, and it would seem to have the effect of scandalising them from an embracing of the Faith. You may awe them into believing the wonders of Creation and Redemption, because you can get them to admit what God can do in His power and His infinite love. They will wonder at the history of the Crucifixion, but you can prove to them how God loved the world, and gave His Son for its redemption. You may prepare the way, and tell them of the institution of this Adorable Sacrament, and when you have gained their readiness to believe it, if they ask you: Is this Mystery practically believed, and do Catholics cling to their Lord in this manifestation of Love? what is to be answered? If we have to admit, to our shame and humiliation, that there are some who avoid our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, who consider approaching to Him as a painful task, from which they shrink, even to their destruction, what would such inquirers conclude, but that either the whole doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament is an unfounded myth, or that those who pretend to believe in It, and treat It thus, are more unreasonable than unbelievers, and that it would be better for themselves to remain in their infidelity, than to run the risk of imitating such ingratitude!

What astonishment, too, must not such unloving conduct create in the Angels and blessed Saints in Heaven? If there is one privilege that even angels may envy the Church upon earth, it is that of Holy Communion. It has not been revealed to us that they have ever been honoured, as is a fervent Communicant. We call the Blessed Sacrament the Bread of Angels, not because Angels have ever received It (for the Sacraments are not for Angels, but for men), but because those who receive It, ought to emulate the love and the purity of Angels. They guard the Blessed Sacrament, and here, in countless adoring numbers, they are watching over their own Lord and God in this most sacred Mystery. And as they are interested about us, rejoicing at the conversion of sinners, and gaining by their prayers grace and protection for us who are destined to be their future companions, what can be their thoughts, faithful and loyal spirits as they are, when they see men turning away from what has been especially instituted for man, and valuing so little what they have defended, and always are defending, with such zealous fidelity? What can be the feeling of the special Angel-Guardian of an ungenerous and unfaithful Catholic! We hear of good angels weeping:[4] not that sorrow really ever visits those blissful spirits; but if anything

[4] Isaias xxxiii. 7.

could bring sorrow upon them, it would be to see those whom Almighty God has placed under their charge, bearing so little a share in their zeal for the honour and glory of their God.

And what do the Saints in Heaven think, as they are allowed in the light of God to see such want of love for a Mystery, which was to them when upon earth an object of such fervent devotion, and to which they have attributed their perseverance and their salvation? The Heaven which they enjoy is destined for those who are still combating upon earth, and it is now their reward for a fidelity which we can imitate, if we only have the spirit to do so, and for which we can obtain the spirit, if we only have recourse to means equally at our disposal as once at theirs. They have found the truth of our dear Lord's promise and declaration: *He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day.*[5] They believed this word: they did eat: they were nourished, strengthened, cheered on by this heavenly Bread in their pilgrimage, and they have been raised up, and now their reward is exceeding great in Heaven. But what can they think of those with whom they still hold some shadow at least of communion, to see such an indifference to what they prized so highly, and the fatal neglect of a duty so closely connected with the gaining of Heaven! Raise your thoughts to Heaven, my dear brethren, and then what else can you do, but accept a condition which secures it for you?

And as the Church upon earth is one with the Church in Heaven, one in sympathy and one in love, how can she but mourn and feel solicitous for those professed children and members, who have so little share in her devotion and love for this Sacred Mystery? If she asks the question: *Where can we buy bread, that these may eat?* she knows indeed where the support is to be obtained, for she always has it within her reach; but her real solicitude is, how to apply the rich means at her disposal, and how to induce those disloyal children to *taste and see how sweet is the Lord.*[6] And if now, in the name of the Church, anxious and sorrowing for the thoughtlessness and the consequent ruin of those so dear to us, we, the ministers of this Church, may seem to be earnest, almost out of season, in pressing a duty which almost all of you, good, devout, loving frequenters of the holy Sacraments value so highly, and of which you prove your value by the practice of your lives, we must ask you to bear with us; for you cannot altogether enter into the feelings of a Priest, when he has to be enforcing the duty which every Catholic owes to the

[5] John vi. 55. [6] Ps. xxxiii. 9.

Blessed Sacrament. You cannot adequately share the sympathy of a Priest, when he has to speak upon such a subject, and especially when he finds that, notwithstanding all his efforts, Holy Communion is neglected, and the invited *will not come*.

I know what the Blessed Sacrament is to you; but you do not know, or at least you cannot really feel, what It is to a Priest. To you It is the Food of your soul: It is the delight of your spiritual life: It is your support and strength in trial and temptation: It is the object of your most tender love, the happy and true source of your purest joy: It is everything to you—the foretaste of Heaven, and the pledge of your future glory. Your devotion to this Adorable Mystery may be far greater than mine: your love more practical and constant, and your reward from our dear generous Lord more abundant. But yet a Priest has a connexion with the Blessed Sacrament of a special kind. The Sacrament of Holy Orders makes him what you have not been made—the guardian, the defender, the preacher of the rights and claims of this Mystery of Love. Our Lord, in His silent Life here, watches, and longs for devout partakers of Him. He wants to be united with souls, and therefore Holy Communion is a direct end of His abiding with us. Each consecrated Host, you know, is to find Its last resting-place in some breast or other: It is consecrated in order that It may be received; and Holy Communion (think of this, my dear brethren, for it deserves your thought) is a greater joy to our dear Lord than it can be to us, because His love for us is far greater than ours can be for Him. And yet He watches and longs, but He says nothing. He asks us to speak for Him, whilst Himself is silent; and He hopes that our words may be fruitful, and that we may draw some one to Him; and surely He must bless our words, because they express His own thought, and the warmest wish of His Sacred Heart.

And if a Priest, then, does press this duty of Holy Communion, though there are so many of you who do not require to be pressed, think of his duties to the Blessed Sacrament and of his sacred responsibility, and you will not say that he is earnest out of season. When the good Shepherd went in search of the one wandering sheep, and seemed for a time to lose all anxiety about the hundred that were safe; if those hundred were to be conceived as murmuring and expressing their pain at his absence on his mission of love, might not he, who loved them all, assure them that he would do the very same for each one of them, if it should ever require such a proof of his pastoral care? Do you not remember the answer of the father of the returned prodigal,

when the elder brother who had never left home expressed his jealousy at the father's signs of joy? *Son, thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine.*[7] You who know the value of the Sacraments, who are constantly faithful to your duties in their regard, who endeavour, by a frequent worthy reception of them, to preserve yourselves in the grace and friendship of God, and to make His love increase in your souls, will bear with us if we seem sometimes, in these days of salvation, to be forgetting you, whilst we express the deep anxiety that presses upon us in respect to others. You are always with us; and because you love the Blessed Sacrament, you must be glad for every effort that is made to induce others to love It also. What a pain it would be to you, if you only knew it, as we are bound to know it, to see the loving designs of the Sacred Heart of our dearest Lord, opposed by those who refuse His invitation to come to Him! In your prayers and holy Communions have the charity to think of them, and to pray for them. Pray that the good may persevere: pray for your own perseverance. Pray that the weak may be strengthened, sinners converted; that there may not be one of our little flock who will neglect his Easter duties; so that we may be able to thank God in the words of our Blessed Lord: *Of those whom Thou hast given Me, not one have I lost;*[8] and that when the Church in her anxiety calls out: *Where can we find bread, that these may eat?* they may come, one and all, and receive their share, and not a single one faint on his journey home.

[7] Luke xv. 31. [8] John xviii. 9.

SERMON XXIV.

PASSION SUNDAY.

THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD.

How much more shall the Blood of Christ, who by the Holy Ghost offered Himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God!

THE holy time of Lent has worn on and is drawing to a close; and the Church now concentrates her efforts towards one great argument, in order to gain the end which she has in view in these days of salvation. In her Liturgy she even drops the name of Lent, and calls this the time of the Passion. She diminishes still more any signs of joy that she has permitted until now, and brings in deeper solemnity in her ceremonial. She veils the Crucifix, in order to make it still more an object of faith, by rendering it less an object of sight; and she intensifies her devotion towards the most Precious Blood, the shedding of which was, in the designs of the Eternal Father, agreed upon as a condition for the blotting out of the sins of man. On Friday last she celebrated a feast in Its honour; and in the Epistle of to-day she uses the noble words of St. Paul, in order to bring forward Its claims upon our devotion. On many occasions this holy Apostle reminds us of the Mystery of the Precious Blood, and tells us what we owe to the great Price at which we have been bought. He remembered always what had been done for himself, and how he had been delivered from sin. And in to-day's Epistle, he reminds the Hebrews what glory that shedding had gained for Him who poured It forth, as It had gained redemption and mercy for us for whom It had been shed.

We will to-day consider the Mystery of the Precious Blood. We will see what was Its work in the bitter Passion of our most holy Redeemer, and study the lessons which It presents to us.

I. When the Wisdom of God decreed the Mystery of the Incarnation, the presence of the Most Precious Blood in the Body fitted for the Word made Flesh, was necessarily implied, and the shedding of that Blood was offered and accepted. For the Only-

begotten Son of the Eternal Father was to take a living human Body of His Virgin-Mother.[1] He was to take Flesh, which is the literal meaning of becoming incarnate; and in the human nature thus assumed, and hypostatically united with the Divine nature, He was to offer Himself in Sacrifice to His Father, in order to satisfy the exigencies of His glory, and by the shedding of the Blood which circulated through His Body, to wash away the sins of those whom He had undertaken to redeem. He was to lay down His life as a victim offered in sacrifice; and this, in accordance with God's own legislation, implied the pouring out of His Blood; for in Leviticus we are told, that *the life of the flesh is in the blood;*[2] and therefore in the sacrifice of living victims the blood was always shed, in testimony of God, as Creator, being the Author and Arbiter of life and death. Thus the work of the Precious Blood in the Passion of our Blessed Lord, is clearly assigned in those declarations of the Sacred Scripture, in which the Mystery of the Incarnation with its blessed results is brought before us. *God so loved the world as to give His Only-begotten Son . . . that the world might be saved by Him;*[3] *who being in the form of God . . . emptied Himself, being made in the likeness of men, humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.*[4] *He blotted out the handwriting against us, fastening it to the cross;*[5] *in whom we have redemption through His Blood;*[6] *and thus we are redeemed, not by corruptible things as gold or silver, but with the Precious Blood of Christ.*[7]

St. Paul, in writing to the Hebrews, as we see from this day's Epistle, argues upon the efficacy of the Precious Blood, from the consequences attached to the figures of It in the Old Testament. It was by the anointing of the door-posts of the houses of the Israelites with the blood of a lamb, that they were saved from the calamity which befel the Egyptians of having their first-born slain; and by the sprinkling of the blood of goats and oxen were sanctified those who had been defiled; and in the same manner, after Moses had written down the words of the law, and read them to the people, he sprinkled the book and the children of Israel with blood, saying: *This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined to you.*[8] How much more does He, who is the true Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world, and to offer Himself as the one great Sacrifice to which all others owed their efficacy, wash away our sins and reconcile

[1] 'Animatum corpus sumens de Virgine nasci dignatus est.' Ant. in Vesp. Circumc. D.N.J.C. [2] Lev. xvii. 11.
[3] John iii. 16, 17. [4] Phil. ii. 6, 8. [5] Col. ii. 14.
[6] Ibid. i. 14. [7] 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. [8] Heb. ix. 13, 20.

us to His Father? And thus in the Old Testament was prefigured the work which in the New was assigned to the shedding of the Precious Blood.

Go through the details of the bitter Passion, and you will see how fully and how generously the Price demanded was paid by the pouring out of this saving stream. When in His Infancy, the Name of Jesus, indicative of His office of Saviour, was bestowed upon Him, it was imposed at the time of the first shedding of His Blood in the right of Circumcision. And when at the end of His Life He is to complete the work which that Name implied, see now in every detail the Precious Blood streams forth. Take the five Dolorous Mysteries of the Rosary, as marking out five of the leading stages of the Passion, and everywhere you see Its Presence. In the agony in the garden of Gethsemani, when in His Prayer our Blessed Lord is offering Himself as the Victim for the redemption of the world, the Precious Blood, impatient to do Its work, bursts out through the prison which confined It, gains an outlet through every pore, and as St. Luke tells us: *His sweat became as drops of Blood trickling down upon the ground.*[9] In the cruel punishment inflicted upon Him in His scourging, the Precious Blood, drawn forth by every stroke, is scattered around in profusion, and as It falls upon those around, It is answering to the cry which had been uttered, when the crowd, insisting on His condemnation, called aloud: *His Blood be upon us and upon our children!*[10] And because the scourge may have spared His Sacred Head, another means must be devised for the holy stream to issue thence, and so His enemies, *platting a crown of thorns, put it upon His Head . . . and they took the reed and struck His Head.*[11] Nor was it enough that He should then at once be nailed to the Cross on which His Sacrifice was to be accomplished, but the Precious Blood is to mark the road on which He is to go towards the place of execution. His Cross is laid upon His shoulders, and from the middle of Jerusalem to the top of Mount Calvary you might trace His last painful journey, by the marks made through the repetition of what had taken place spontaneously in Gethsemani; for again *His sweat becomes as drops of Blood*, and, aided by the blows of those who urge Him forward, comes *trickling down upon the ground.* Well might the poor unhappy Judas, when he saw the awful result of his deed of treason, cry out in his despairing anguish: *I have sinned in betraying innocent Blood.*[12]

And when at last we come to the final act, if we ask: Why should our Blessed Redeemer have chosen for Himself the cruel and

[9] Luke xxii. 44.
[10] Matt. xxvii. 25.
[11] Ibid. xxvii. 29.
[12] Ibid. xxvii. 4.

most painful death by crucifixion?—the Precious Blood may answer, that it was by that mode It could be shed most abundantly, and prove that what the Psalmist had said was true: *With Him there is plentiful redemption.*[13] For through His Sacred Wounds, whilst He is being fastened to the Cross and hangs upon it, see how the saving stream again flows down, and washes away so effectually the stains which the sins of man had stamped upon the earth. It is now another Deluge: one not to ruin but to save mankind. And as in that first deluge of water, when Almighty God in His anger called it forth to punish His sinful creatures, the element of destruction came in quick obedience to cover the face of the earth, and was supplied from three different sources, rivers and seas overflowing their boundaries, springs gushing forth from every mountain side, and rain pouring down in torrents from the cataracts of heaven; so now that another Element is ordered to do the work of Redemption, It comes pouring out in generous abundance from the Hands and the Feet, and the Sacred Heart through the opened Side. If, then, it was God's decree that *without the shedding of blood there is no remission*,[14] as St. Paul teaches us, can we not feel that the Passion has indeed secured pardon for us, through the unlimited love of Him, *in Whom we have redemption through His Blood, the remission of sins?*[15] Has not our good and most merciful God turned into a blessing what the cruel persecutors of His Son meant as an imprecation when they made the air reëcho with their cry: *His Blood be upon us and upon our children!*

II. We have been redeemed by the most Precious Blood; but that is not all, we are taught and encouraged by It. It has not only been given as the Price of Redemption, It has been given and is for ever left with us that we may study and apply Its rich and practical lessons. What are these lessons? The Precious Blood, we shall find, reveals to us Mysteries regarding the Attributes of God. It displays to us a motive by which the Church in her working is influenced; and It suggests to us what ought to be our own conduct when we ponder upon what we profess to believe.

1. The shedding of the Precious Blood very strikingly impresses us with a sense of the Justice of God in His punishment of sin, and more strikingly than any visitation which may be made upon us in consequence of our transgressions. That our first parents should, in consequence of their refusal to obey, have been driven out of Paradise, and should have brought so many miseries upon their descendants, is indeed an evidence of the severity of God's judgments upon sin. That for sin persevered in and unforgiven,

[13] Ps. cxxix. [14] Heb. ix. 22. [15] Col. i. 14.

souls should be for ever doomed to separation from God and exclusion from Heaven, is another awful evidence of this severity. But still, great as are these punishments, they yield in severity and in a manifestation of justice, to what is placed before us in the details of the Passion of our dear Lord. In the two cases we have considered it is man that is punished: in the Passion it is God that suffers for sin; for it is not the blood of a man that is demanded as satisfaction, but the only-begotten Son of God becomes the Victim, and it is He, the Son of the Eternal Father, that pays His Precious Blood as the Price of our redemption, and in Its painful shedding is being punished for the commission of the sins of men.

And in this same Mystery appears the infinitude of the Mercy of God. Mercy will not be outstripped by Justice in God's dealings with men, and the offering of the Precious Blood shows that Mercy can even answer and superabundantly pay all the demands of the severest Justice. A Price is required, and how can it be satisfied? How can poor, unworthy, weak man give to God all that is insisted upon? God asks for something of infinite value, for nothing else can satisfy Him; and if all men gave up all that they had, their lives, themselves, and all that they could ever possess, what does that come to when weighed against an infinite claim? He who became man, being God equal to His Father, and continuing to be God although He has become man, has within Himself an equivalent to every demand. He humbles Himself: He becomes obedient to the death of the Cross: He sheds His Precious Blood, and the Cross on which He sheds It, becomes, as the Church so beautifully and truly expresses it, the balance and scales in which weight is measured against weight, and there is found to be nothing deficient, and the debt is amply paid.[16] How strikingly does this contest between Justice and Mercy show us the value of an immortal soul, our own soul, which required to be redeemed at such a Price! Such is God's view of the work and efficacy of the most Precious Blood. Thus are His attributes revealed in this Mystery.

2. The Church too, in which God is ever working upon earth, shows that she never forgets the Mystery of the Precious *Blood of Christ, Who, by the Holy Ghost, offered Himself unspotted unto God, to cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* You know, my dear brethren, how the Church never ceases to be offering to God the tribute of Prayer, and how in a continuous

[16] Beata cujus brachiis
Sæcli pependit Pretium:
Statera facta Corporis,
Prædamque tulit tartari.
Hymn, *Vexilla Regis.*

Thrice blest, upon whose arms outstretched
The Saviour of the world reclin'd;
Balance sublime! upon whose beam
Was weighed the ransom of mankind.
Caswall's *Lyra Catholica.*

stream this tribute is always ascending from earth to Heaven. But to what does Prayer owe its efficacy? Not to the merits of the creature who dares to offer it,[17] but to the claims of Him through Whom it is presented with so great success. 'We beseech Thee to help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Precious Blood.' Confidence is an essential quality of prayer: it is that which gives it force to ascend to Heaven, and which makes Almighty God bend down to accept and grant it. And how can prayer be otherwise than confident when it is offered up through that Precious Blood, *which speaketh better than that of Abel?*[18] And the Holy Sacraments which the Church administers for the life and perfection of our souls, to what do they owe their efficacy? We are taught in our Catechism, that it is 'to the merits of Christ's Precious Blood, which they apply to our souls.' How is it that Baptism washes away sin? The Precious Blood, invisible to human eyes, mystically works in that first of our Saviour's fountains, from which we have all been glad to draw the water by which we have been cleansed from our original stain. And when, through a subsequent unfaithfulness, our baptismal innocence has been lost, and we have, in the anguish of our soul, called for pardon, it has been through that same Precious Blood, working in the Sacrament of Penance, that we have gained absolution, whilst we are bent humbly down before the Crucifix, at the knees of the Minister of God.

But, my dear brethren, what have we in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and in the abiding Presence of our dearest Lord in the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar? What do we mean by that Real Presence of which we speak, when we profess our faith in this Mystery of Love? Then and there, as truly as upon Calvary, the Precious Blood is streaming down, or circulating through the body of Him who has again, in this Sacrament, become Flesh, and dwells amongst us. For the Sacrifice of the Mass, and the Sacrifice of the Cross, are one and the same: the Victim is the same: the Priest, that is, our Blessed Lord Himself, is the same; and therefore the Precious Blood shed mystically, though not visibly, is then calling out for blessings and pardon as loudly, and as efficaciously, as when upon that first Good Friday It was poured out so abundantly for the redemption of the world. Would there not be more love for this sacred Mystery, and a more constant attendance at the Altar of God, if this were only remembered? And yet it is known, it is acknowledged, it is not denied, but, unfortunately also, it is not thought of. And in Holy Communion, therefore, what is received?

[17] *Audemus dicere:* introduction to the Pater Noster at Mass.
[18] Heb. xii. 24.

Where is the Precious Blood then? Happy Magdalene, we often think, who on the day of the world's redemption took up her position at the Feet of our crucified Lord, and adored the holy Drops which came trickling forth! Yet closer still are these same Drops to us, when They are received by us for the nourishment of our soul, and we are able to go away from the Banquet of Love fully comforted, and wonderfully refreshed.

3. And in our dealings with God, does not the Precious Blood argue with us? and when, perhaps, we may be tempted to indolence, and to want of faithfulness, in duties which God has imposed upon us, and by the fulfilment of which He condescends to be well-pleased, does it not taunt us with our little fervour, and our too great readiness to give up our labour through fatigue and want of energy? We do not want St. Paul to say to us in his energetic language: *You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*[19] Far, very far short of that have been our poor efforts. And yet, if our Blessed Lord did so much for us, *setting us an example that we should walk in His footsteps,*[20] resisting for us the enemy of our salvation, not only unto Blood, but shedding It generously to the last drop for our sake, why ought we not to do at least something more for Him who has done so much for us? The Precious Blood asks this question, and by asking it, rebukes us for our cowardice in the service of God. Is it so hard to love and to serve God, when such a thought is impressed upon us? Remember that He also asks you, and argues with you, presents His claims and urges them upon you, not on the plea that He is your Creator and Lawgiver, and that He has a right to demand your whole service and obedience, because you are not your own master, being dependent upon Him, but He pleads with you for your heart: He reminds you that He has bought you, and for a great Price; and therefore appeals to your gratitude and love as motives to your fidelity.

Is it so hard to do good, to face trials, to perform acts of self-denial, to forgive injuries, to exercise acts of charity and mercy, when we remember what we are: a purchased people, marked with the sign of our redemption, and washed clean in the Blood of the Lamb! Why should the world have the first choice in bidding for our allegiance? Has the world redeemed us, and suffered for us, and shed any of its blood through love for us? And yet what have we done, when we have made God's interests subordinate to those of the world, and have forgotten the sacred claims of Him who upon the Cross conquered the world, and became doubly entitled to our loyalty and love?

[19] Heb. xii. 4. [20] 1 Pet. ii. 21.

Do not, my dear brethren, allow the appeal of the Precious Blood to be made in vain! Listen to Its calls, and all will be well. It has been invoked in your behalf, and, in obedience to the cries of those who, prophetically, though they knew it not, exclaimed: *His Blood be upon us and upon our children*, It has come down in rich blessings upon you. For it is often the way with God, that where man does that which is evil, God steps in, and by His interference turns the act into an occasion of blessing. What could have been more sad to the earth than our first parents' fall? yet the Church in her beautiful Liturgy in Holy Week does not hesitate to say of their fault: *O felix Culpa!* 'Oh! happy fault, which deserved such and so great a Redeemer!' So has it been with this exclamation, *His Blood be upon us and upon our children!* for from the day in which it was first uttered, a result has followed which has brought blessing upon the earth. Its echo has ever since been resounding throughout the Church, encouraging faith, supporting life, and making love more fervent. The Sacred Heart through which the Precious Blood circulated then, is still Its centre, and is sending It forth in generous and active streams to do Its good work; and as in Paradise, *a spring rose out of the earth, watering all the surface of the earth*,[21] so does this Well of Life and Grace for ever contribute to the richness and activity of the Church.

Penitents have thought of this saving stream flowing from the Sacred Wounds, and at the foot of the Crucifix have cried out with confidence for pardon, and in answer to their contrition and humility, have gained the blessing they besought. Apostles have thought upon this great Price which has been given for every soul, and in their eagerness to bring more souls under its influence, have left home and kindred and country to carry the Name of Jesus, and the knowledge of the value of His Precious Blood to those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. Martyrs have thought upon It, and have been glad to have the opportunity of returning blood for Blood. Virgins and Anchorets have thought upon It, and the beauty of the world became tarnished and unsightly to them, and in a life of seclusion they have loved to dwell upon the remembrance of such unequalled love. Saints of every kind by this thought have been helped on in their holy path, and have not found it so hard to go on persevering in the service of One who never showed Himself faint-hearted or ungenerous in the service of others.

Remember, then, my dear brethren, that this Precious Blood has been shed for you: not for all of you merely, but for each

[21] Gen. ii. 6.

one of you. Do not stand in the way of Its doing in your behalf what it can do: cleanse you, preserve you, strengthen you, and save you. Go on in an earnest spirit of obedience, and through the Precious Blood pray constantly for perseverance. You may have to suffer and to make sacrifices: but what will all this be in comparison with what He did for you, who through His Passion has purchased your crown? Persevere, and then you will be numbered among those of whom St. John tells us, that he saw clothed in white garments, and bearing palms in their hands. And when he asked who and whence they were, he was told: *These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb.*[22]

[22] Rev. vii. 14.

SERMON XXV.

PALM SUNDAY.

TRIUMPH BEFORE SORROW.

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord!

The event which we commemorate to-day, and which is recorded in the Gospel of Palm Sunday, is certainly one of the most mysterious events in the Life of our Blessed Lord. It is strange and mysterious, not when viewed in itself, as if it stood alone; because we feel that nothing is in itself more natural than that, upon His entrance into Jerusalem, the whole population of a city which He loved so well, and which He had honoured beyond any other, should flock out to meet Him, and welcome Him within its walls with loud acclamations of joy. Well might the men and women and children go out to meet Him upon His approach, and lead Him forward triumphantly, singing, Hosanna to the Son of David! He deserved this, and more than this; if it were only some acknowledgment on the part of the people of Jerusalem of the many blessings He had bestowed upon that favoured city. Therefore it is not mysterious nor strange, when viewed in itself, that such a tribute should have been paid as we are commemorating in the ceremonial of to-day. But it is strange and mysterious for this reason, that it is not to be viewed alone, but in connexion with other events which had gone before and which were about to follow. For it often happens, either that a fact which is hard to understand when taken alone, may receive light and be quite explicable when viewed in connexion with others which bear upon it: or that a fact which of itself may seem most natural and obvious, may at once present itself as strange and extraordinary when it is considered in union with other facts which seem irreconcilable with it. For instance, if we hear of a rich man giving on some occasion an abundant alms, it may occur to us as being most natural that he should do so, from the fact of his being rich, and therefore able to afford the generous

act. But if that person had always been noted for great penury, if it were the case that he had always hardened himself against every appeal, and had closed his eyes and heart against the cries of the indigent, then we are surprised to hear of an exception: we seek a reason for it, and suppose that some unusual cause existed which gained his sympathy, or that his heart had undergone a great and most desirable change.

Take the event, then, which the Church brings before us to-day, and see how it clashes with what had so uniformly gone before, and with what was to follow so quickly after. Palm Sunday, you know, is not the opening of a week of triumph, but of sorrow and humiliation. *Hosanna to the Son of David* upon one day, and loud cries of *Crucify Him, crucify Him* two or three days later, do not sound harmoniously together. And yet the latter cry, Crucify Him, is less discordant with the continuous acts of opposition and threatened persecution which ever were His lot, than the signs and exclamations of jubilee which attended His last entrance into Jerusalem. One of the good and wonderful deeds which had just been performed by our Blessed Lord was the resuscitation of Lazarus; and this striking manifestation of His Divine power had impressed the crowds with wonder, but was the special cause why the more influential party in Jerusalem, the Scribes, Pharisees, and Priests, determined to put Him to death. *What shall we do*, they said; *for this man doth many miracles?* . . . And *from that day, therefore, they determined to put Him to death.*[1] He had also, not long before, called His disciples aside, and told them what awaited Him in Jerusalem at the hands of these persecutors, and had severely rebuked St. Peter when trying to dissuade Him from His Passion.[2] Therefore the cries of His persecutors do not astonish us, but the acclamations of the crowd singing His praises, do seem out of bearing with what had been and what was to be. There is something to learn here, and it is well for us to study the lesson suggested to us.

I. We will begin by showing how in the Life of our Blessed Lord, we find the principle asserted which is illustrated constantly in the Church. The alternations of the Gospels on these Sundays in Lent bring before us the fact, that the weakness of the human nature and the glory of the Divine nature are both manifested in the actions recorded for our instruction. In Him both natures existed, and each nature manifested itself, as nature always does, in its operations. Sometimes one predominates, sometimes the other. He was Son of God and Son of Man: Son of the Eternal Father, and Son of Mary. As God, He was

[1] John xi. 47, 53. [2] Matt. xvi. 21, 23.

so high and great; as Man, so humble and meek. He finds it necessary therefore to caution and forewarn His disciples with reference to His Passion, lest the humiliations which were then to attend Him should make them ignore His Divinity, and forget the proofs He had often given in His miracles and His sublime lessons, that He was God as well as Man. As Man, He was cast off by man; yet all the while He was attended and watched over by Angels, who loved to look upon Him, and who were unceasingly adoring Him.

Take various instances by which His Life was marked, and you will see how this principle is affirmed. When He is to be born into the world which He was coming to redeem, Prophets went more remotely before Him to announce His coming, and an Archangel is the more immediate messenger of the accomplishment of a mystery so full of blessings to man. And yet how does man himself act? When His holy Mother, under the escort of the good and faithful St. Joseph, seeks in Bethlehem a fitting spot to be His birthplace, the answer they everywhere receive is, that *there was no room for them*.[3] And He is born as an outcast: poor shepherds are his first visitors; but meanwhile Angels are hovering above His crib, and sing His praises. Soon after, He again becomes an object of man's rejection. Herod strives to put Him to death when only just born, and He is obliged to seek refuge in the distant Egypt. But again it is by the intervention and protection of Angels He is saved from the danger threatened by man; for Joseph is cautioned by a messenger from heaven, and told to *take the Child and His Mother, and flee into Egypt*,[4] whence the Angel guides Him home again when the time of danger had passed away.

In the beginning of this holy time of Lent we saw Him in His solitude in the desert, exposed to the temptations of the evil spirit, and verifying that saying of St. Paul, that He was *tempted in all things like as we are*.[5] But no sooner is the tempter defeated and put to flight, than Angels come and minister to Him. So in His Agony in the Garden, when the bitterness of His Passion is being experienced by Him, and the sins of man are doing their work of steeping His sacred Heart at that time in such deep sorrow, an Angel comes to offer Him a sympathy and comfort which His favoured Apostles even are unable to afford Him in those three hours of anguish. When, immediately after leaving the Garden of Gethsemani, He is seized by His enemies, to Peter who in an over-wrought zeal was defending Him with his sword, He said, *Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father, and He will*

[3] Luke ii. 7. [4] Matt. ii. 13. [5] Heb. iv. 15.

give Me presently more than twelve legions of Angels?[6] At the moment of His Death too, when man's triumph over Him seemed to be supreme, nature pays Him homage. The darkening of the sun, the rending asunder of rocks, and the resuscitation of many that were dead, proved that all the time that He was humbled in the eyes of man, He was possessed of a higher power, which man could not dare to withstand, and which continued throughout His humiliations to assert its presence. And all through His Life it was the same: His miracles and His words of wisdom were constantly affirming that He had within Him something beyond what was human, and which the assaults of His enemies could never touch.

The lesson which is taught us on Palm Sunday of triumph amid suffering, is, as we said a little before, constantly urged upon us during the time of Lent, by the alternations of the Gospels on the Sundays. The Gospel of the first Sunday records the humiliation which befel Him, when in the desert the evil spirit tempted Him. There we see the Humanity in a state which, from our own experience, we know to be one of anxiety and trial, because there is a possibility (though this cannot be conceived existing in His case) of our not being equal to the struggle, and, through some fault of our own, failing in our allegiance. Temptation, then, is a state of humiliation. But compensation is made by the glory of the Transfiguration, which, on the second Sunday of Lent, we made the object of our consideration, when we felt moved by the same spirit as St. Peter was, and could wish to keep our Lord fixed and constant in a state which so well befitted the only-begotten Son of God. On the third Sunday it is again a humiliation to which we find Him exposed, when the influence of the same evil spirit whom He had conquered in His temptation, is adduced by His enemies as the operating cause of His miracles. But on the fourth, an admiring crowd is about Him wishing to proclaim Him king, in acknowledgment of the evidence He had given of His Divinity in the multiplication of the loaves in the desert. Again, on last Sunday, Passion Sunday, the power of His enemies seems to prevail; and there is on the part of our Lord an appearance of weakness, when, after in noble language asserting His eternal existence, He hides Himself from those that were taking up stones to cast at Him, and escapes out of the Temple. And to-day comes His triumphant entry into Jerusalem amid signs of jubilation; although the joy is to be but short-lived, and bitter sorrow is to follow in its wake. But all this illustrates our principle, that there is an intermingling of joy and glory with the sorrows which are His most ordinary lot.

[6] Matt. xxvi. 53.

II. It will be very much to our advantage, and will serve as an explanation of facts, which may perplex us and make us anxious in the history of the Church upon earth, if we see how the principle asserted in the Life of our Lord may be applied in the case of His Church.[7] As in Him there were two distinct natures united in one Person, so in the Church, of which unity is an essential quality, there are the two elements, the human and the Divine. As our Lord was God before He became Man, and did not cease to be God after He had become Man, so the Apostles were men before they received their commission and were filled with the Holy Ghost; but they still continued men although inhabited by the Divine Spirit. One or other of these elements in the Church is for ever manifesting itself; and though they may appear at times hard to reconcile, one does not exclude the other, but oftentimes affirms its presence. Those who are outside the Church see her only in her human aspect, and have not the gift of recognising the Divine reality which exists all the time, and is appreciated by those within. Just as when Eliseus's servant was alarmed when he saw a great army besetting the city, in which the prophet was sheltered, in order to apprehend him, and saw not, until his eyes were opened by his master, the greater host of spiritual defenders who were protecting him;[8] so those that have not the graces which are given to those within the Church, are not aware of the supernatural helps which are always attending her, by which she is supported in her career, notwithstanding all the opposition brought against her by the world.

Perhaps a difficulty may sometimes suggest itself, why, if the Church is really a Divine institution, and our Lord and the Holy Spirit are abiding constantly within her, does she seem so abject and weak; and why do those who make open and deliberate attacks upon her, triumph, in spite of all her claims and her threats of Divine vengeance upon her assailants? It is a difficulty, we may admit, and one that the world takes great advantage of. But how do we meet it? Palm Sunday suggests our answer. We look all through the history of the Church: we do not take the present day as if it were the only day in the Church's existence; and her past history tells us of many, very many, triumphs and conquests, even over those kingdoms and nations which now are perhaps rebelling against her. How did each of them become christianized and civilized? (for practically Christianity and civilisation go together.) It was the Church that gained them from their previous state of unbelief, and that brought

[7] See also the Second Sunday of Lent, where much the same argument is used.

[8] 4 Kings vi. 17.

in light where before darkness had prevailed. And we do more than this: we look confidently into the future; for we know that there are promises enregistered which cannot fail in their fulfilment, and that in spite of all the opposition that awaits her, the Church will triumph in the end, and after a time of suffering will come the glory of the Resurrection.

Who were the Apostles, but *the last of men, men appointed unto death*,[9] as St. Paul tells us. In the eyes of the world there were not many wise, nor strong, nor influential amongst themselves or their followers; and yet they went out bravely to the struggle that was before them; and though the world seemed to be conquering them, as one by one they were imprisoned and put to death, still they were the conquerors, for they succeeded in converting the world and in making it Christian. In them the human element showed itself not unfrequently. We read of their jealousy and rivalries, of their timidity, of their being scandalized at witnessing the humiliations of their Lord; and yet these were the chosen pillars of the Church, well fitted for the weight they had to bear, when the Holy Spirit entered into them and filled them with the wisdom and fortitude requisite for their work. Hear how St. Paul tells us of his vicissitudes of triumph and sorrow. At times he presents himself before us buoyed up by a spirit of noble enthusiasm which he defied any power to subdue: he tells us of spiritual favours which had been vouchsafed to him, and how in his ravishments in prayer, the secrets of even the third heaven were unfolded to him. But there is another phase under which he sometimes is found: he tells of a struggle against a law which he forswears, but which seems to fetter him in spite of his protest against it, leading him to do evil which he would not, and to avoid good which he wished to do; so that in a kind of despondency he cries out: *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*[10] And as a caution against spiritual pride because of his heavenly favours, he tells us of an angel of Satan given to him to buffet him, from which in much solicitude he was constantly begging to be delivered.[11]

There is no necessity for further illustrations of the principle, which always will be asserting its existence, that there is an admixture of joy and sorrow, that there are alternations of triumph and suffering, of victory and humiliations in the Church. Be not disheartened and too easily cast down, if you have to experience them in your own individual case. In your career you must expect trials to your faith, and the occurrence of occasions which will call for an unusual manifestation of confidence. But if your

[9] 1 Cor. iv. 9. [10] Rom. vii. 24. [11] 2 Cor. xii. 7.

faith and hope are well-grounded, no trials can destroy them or diminish their influence. In face of all that is human, remember the presence of that which is Divine. God prefers that in this world there should be good in spite of evil, rather than good without evil. The Passion of our Lord, upon which we are in this Holy Week to be concentrating our thoughts, was brought about by the plots of wicked men; but we know that it has been to us and to the whole world the source of the richest blessings. Go, then, cheerfully forward, and do not hesitate to sing your own Hosannas, as you proceed to meditate on the great mysteries which are now once more to be accomplished amongst us, as we realise their recurrence in the vivid scenes enacted by the Church in the splendid Liturgy of this week. And whilst you meditate on the great Event accomplished on Calvary, and see how the sufferings of Him who became Man for our Redemption, followed quickly after His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, but were again followed equally in speed by the glory of the Resurrection, be filled with a cheerful certainty, that in the Church, which you love and whose children you are, the time of sorrow will pass away, and days of triumph and victory will return again.

SERMON XXVI.

GOOD FRIDAY.

And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified Him there. Luke xxiii. 33.

SUCH is the simple record of that awful Fact, the memory of which is to-day absorbing our thoughts, and claiming love and gratitude from every Christian heart. For who can refuse to-day to think upon the great scene which was enacted upon Calvary upon that first Good Friday, the day of bitter sorrow to the Man of Sorrows: a day, indeed, which brought blessings upon the world, but blessings so dearly bought, and so cruelly paid for! And who that thinks upon it, can refuse the tribute, which He that has been crucified deserves and demands from all those who see Him in the hour of His affliction: a tribute of sympathy, of thankfulness, of a generous and devoted love!

I am to ask you to-day to go, as it were on a pilgrimage, to that place which is called Calvary. It is outside of the city; for you must put away the distracting thoughts of the city, and forget everything else, withdrawing in spirit towards Him, *Who suffered without the gate. Let us, therefore, go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.*[1] There once sat Jeremias, as he said in his words of lamentation: *O all ye that pass by, stay and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow!* It was not of his own sorrow that the prophet sang his plaintive song, but because he foresaw the awful deed upon which we are looking back to-day. He saw the sorrows of Him who was so cruelly treated by His own children: born outside of Bethlehem, for He was rejected there; and crucified outside of Jerusalem, because He was to die as an outcast.

I. O my dear brethren, what did this painful and cruel Crucifixion imply? Let us try as far as possible to realise it, and let us concentrate our thoughts upon this one act in the bitter Passion of our dear Lord, not diluting our feelings by distributing them over other details. This was the central and concluding act in connexion with our redemption. It was the act made essential in

[1] Heb. xiii. 13.

the decrees of God, Who demanded the Sacrifice which was to be made upon the Cross. It was foretold by the Prophets, one of whom sees in spirit the crucified Redeemer, and calls out in an exclamation of wonder: *What are those wounds in the midst of Thy Hands?*[2] And it was foretold by the dear Victim Himself, when He promised that when lifted up from the earth He would draw all things to Himself. All His Life had been an anticipation of this great act. Simeon had intimated it in His childhood, when he said that He was to be set up as a sign to be contradicted. It had been rehearsed in His Agony in the Garden, when the Precious Blood, which was to flow forth in so many streams at the Crucifixion, began to find Its way from out of His sacred Body, and came dropping down upon the earth. This same act it was that was so much valued by the Apostles, as they went out everywhere preaching Christ crucified: which was so deeply and constantly pondered upon by St. Paul, until he felt himself nailed with Christ to the Cross. And you know how the Church appreciates this great act, putting it always prominently forward in her Creeds, and keeping the recollection of it constantly in the minds and hearts of her children by the practice of the Sign of the Cross, and by the use which she makes of the Crucifix.

The whole Life of our Blessed Lord was a preparation for this end of it, as our life ought to be a preparation for our death. As the future was clearly known by Him, it kept back from Him none of the secrets of the day and the manner of His Death. What we know by faith, He knew by the infinite Wisdom which He possessed; and as we, on each successive Good Friday, commemorate the sad event now long since past, He on each previous anniversary kept the Good Friday, and thought over or made known to His afflicted Mother the awful deed which was to be effected, when His enemies would seize Him and would take Him forth to the place which is called Calvary, and would crucify Him there. Painful as was to be the Day and the deed, yet He longed for it; for He said that He had a baptism wherein He was to be baptised, and He desired its accomplishment:[3] and it was His Baptism in Blood on the Day of His Crucifixion.

His whole sufferings accumulated and were concentrated in this act; and as He thought it over on the eve in His Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemani, well might He pray that if possible that Chalice might pass from Him. Yet did He wish that His Father's Will should be done: and that Will was that He should be taken forth and crucified. The world was to be redeemed by Him, but by the means of crucifixion. The disobedience

[2] Zach. xiii. 6. [3] Luke xii. 50.

of man was to be atoned for by His obedience, but it was to be by an obedience unto death, even to the death of the cross. The Altar, the Victim, the Priest, the completion of the Sacrifice: all these were implied in the Crucifixion. His Blood was to be shed; and without the shedding of Blood there was to be no remission. In the Institution of the Adorable Eucharist at His last Supper, on the evening before His Death, He commemorated the fact of this shedding of Blood, by consecrating the Wine into His Blood, as a separate act after consecrating the Bread into His Body; and He wished that His Apostles, and those that were to come after Him, should ever commemorate this act, by doing what He then gave them power to do, in commemoration of Him.

And He wished that the Church should, until the end of time, do what she is doing to-day: keep the solemnity of Good Friday, and in a spirit of sorrow and of penitence celebrate His Crucifixion and Death, look upon the Crucifix in which this scene is described for us, allow our hearts to be drawn to Him when thus lifted from the earth, and come in a spirit of love and devotion to pay our homage to this emblem of our Redemption. Such is the reality of the Crucifixion. Such was the view taken of this act by our dear and loving Redeemer; and such is the thought presented before us by the Church in the solemnity of this day.

II. Now, my dear brethren, let us ponder leisurely, and with hearts full of love and gratitude, upon the intense physical and mental pains of our dearest Lord in His Crucifixion. It was, indeed, a cruel mode of death, and the cruelty is shown in the slowness and details which attended it. Even in the punishment of the worst criminals, you know how the ministers of human justice recoil from cruelty, and from any slow and lengthened mode of punishment which implies cruelty. The mode of the execution of criminals is rapid; and if the torture of the criminal is designedly or even accidentally lengthened, we shudder and protest against the fact, as being inhuman, and as going beyond the exigencies of justice. But His mode of death by crucifixion was meant to be cruel, and it was meant to be slow and drawn out in cruelty. Although His enemies were eager for His Death, and urged on Pilate to be rapid in condemning Him, yet between the condemnation and the execution, they were patient and deliberate in adding torture to torture.

The Cross is prepared, and it is not kept out of the sight of Him Who was to die by being fastened upon it. It is brought forth, paraded before Him, thrust upon His shoulders; and He is made to commence His Agony by dragging its heavy weight up to the place of execution: *the place which is called Calvary, where*

they crucified Him. The slow and painful journey is completed : the Cross has already done some of its work, and has begun to crush out that Life which is to be immolated upon it ; but now commences the real act of crucifixion. He is not to be fastened to the cross with ropes, as others who suffered such a death oftentimes were, and as may have been the case with the two thieves ; but as His Blood is to be shed, and it was for this that His enemies called out at the time of His condemnation, He is to be nailed to the Altar upon which He is to consummate His Sacrifice. First one Hand is bored through and fixed to its place, then the other. Next one Foot, then the second. And when the Victim is thus fastened, and the most Precious Blood is streaming freely forth, the Cross is raised up, is planted in the position arranged for it, and then is realised the first Crucifix, and the Saviour of the world remains suspended between Heaven and earth, as the Mediator between God and man.

Did He not say that when He should be lifted up from the earth He would draw all things to Himself? And ought He not to do so? Where are our hearts to-day? Are they not upon Calvary, clustered around the Crucifix? There let them remain, and dwell upon the sacred Object which has a right to draw them towards itself. What pain must there not be in those Hands and Feet, in that Head pierced with thorns, and all over that Body which had been scourged and bruised so cruelly. What had those sacred Hands done that they should be so painfully tortured? They were the same which in Bethlehem He had held out so lovingly to welcome those who had then gone to visit Him in His poor ruined birthplace : the same which had often clung around His Mother's neck, or around St. Joseph's, when He was being carried away in the dark night into a place of exile : the same which had been held so often in blessing over the sufferers who came to ask for relief in the time of their affliction : the same which He used to love, after the sun had gone down, to lay upon the heads of the little children, who were brought to Him at that time to receive this sign of His goodness and affection. And there they now are, nailed through, and streaming with Blood!

And those Feet! let Magdalene tell us about them. She had kissed and anointed them in the house of the Pharisee, and what are her feelings as she sees them now wounded, pierced, and bleeding so profusely! Oftentimes had they borne their sacred Burden from street to street, and town to town, and had become sore and wearied, as they once were, when He rested in fatigue by the side of the well, and spoke such merciful words to the poor Samaritan woman. And His whole Body covered with wounds

is extended on the hard wood which supports It. *From the sole of the foot to the top of the head, there is no soundness in Him: wounds, and bruises, and swelling sores.*[4] And His sacred Head, with those Eyes which He had turned with such mercy upon every sufferer and sinner that was brought before Him, see how It hangs forward. It can find no rest; for the thorns are driven in each time that It falls back upon the Cross; and so It leans forward, thus enabling Him the better to see all those who are standing around Him.

And what does He see? In His enemies who are still in crowds about Him, He sees every sinner. The proud Pharisees are there, boasting of their triumph, and deriding Him because of the seeming impotence in which He is then placed. The crowds, which only a few days before had sung Hosanna, have only just silenced their wild cry of Crucify Him, and are now defying Him to give any evidence of His being the Son of God. Might they not, many of them, have witnessed His miracles, and heard His lessons of charity? Parents might be there, whose children had been blessed by Him: but now not one addresses a word of sympathy. *I looked around, and there was no one to comfort Me.*

And yet there are some faithful and loving ones close by His side. His Mother is there. Who can tell of her sorrows, and how those sorrows reflect back upon the Sacred Heart of Him, for Whose sake they have been endured! If it pains the Mother to see her Son suffering so intensely, it pains the Son to see the bitterness of His Mother's affliction. Her life had all been wrapt up in His, with whom her destiny had been so closely blended. The awful events of that day of mourning had oftentimes been rehearsed in the quiet home of Nazareth, and the Good Fridays which He had kept in anticipation, had been kept and commemorated with her. Simeon's prophecy had been but too really fulfilled in her regard, and a sword of grief had pierced her soul. She was not, and could not be absent at the Death of Him for Whom alone she had lived, and had led such a life of suffering. She had met Him on His way to the place called Calvary, as we commemorate in the fourth of the stations, and she witnessed all the dreadful details of His crucifixion. If He spoke words of comfort to the faithful daughters of Jerusalem, what did He not say to her? He would have thanked her for her more than mother's love; for having consented to become His Mother, for having borne and nursed Him, for having shared all the hard privations of His life of contradiction, and for her martyr spirit in

[4] Is. i. 6.

witnessing to Him on that day of humiliation. And though her presence was a comfort, it was an agony also.

And what does the presence of the loving-hearted Apostle St. John suggest? On one occasion, when He had healed ten lepers, and only one came to thank Him, He expressed the feelings of His affectionate Heart, by asking: *Where are the nine?* Were there not twelve Apostles chosen? where are the eleven? One had become a traitor; but why should the other ten be ashamed of Him, or shrink from doing what only one had the spirit to do, to stand by Him and His Mother in such an hour? Therefore, the presence of one Apostle suggests the absence of the others. Where was Peter, who not long before had so vainly boasted: *And if it were necessary for me to die with Thee, I will not deny Thee?* Where was Thomas, who had in a fit of enthusiasm exclaimed: *O Lord, we are ready to go with Thee to prison and to death?*

Magdalene, indeed, is there to give what comfort she is able, but how unavailing it is in the midst of the rough savage crowd which has wrought its vengeance! She is again at His feet, but all her tears and ointments cannot assuage the torture of those cruel nails. Was it not of her fruitless labour and desires the prophet had foretold when speaking of His Wounds: *they are not bound up, nor dressed, nor fomented with oil?*[5] What would she not have done to have prevented this deed of sacrilege; but how helpless is she now that it has been accomplished!

And what does He hear, as He hangs in silence, listening to the confusion which reigns around Him? He hears words of reproach, abuse, defiance, and blasphemy. He hears the derisive laughter and scoffing words of Scribes and Pharisees. He hears the lamentations of His Mother and the broken-hearted Magdalene; but these only add to His pain. Why did not some of the lepers whom He had cleansed, or the lame, and blind, and deaf and dumb, whom He had restored to soundness, stand forward and say something by way of protest against such cruelty, and by way of sympathy to Himself? Even from a quarter, from which we could not have expected it probably, He is taunted and abused; for *the thieves also, that were crucified with Him, reproached Him.*[6] He was, indeed, comforted afterwards by the cry for mercy and pardon from one of them; but at first even both abused Him.

And what were the thoughts with which His Sacred Heart was filled in those hours of anguish! He thought of the bitter ingratitude of those, His own creatures and children, whom He

[5] Is. i. 6. [6] Matt. xxvii. 44.

had come down upon earth to cover with signs of love and generosity. What more could He have done for them! What a return for such a self-sacrificing and devoted Life! But yesterday He had shown the greatest proof of His love in the institution of the Blessed Eucharist: it was His last testament, the crowning act of Love. And here is the act of thanksgiving for such a gift. Read leisurely to-day, during the beautiful ceremony of the Adoration of the Cross, the reproaches which the Church puts into the mouth of our crucified Saviour, and you will see how she speaks His thoughts. 'My people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I offended thee? Answer Me. Because I brought thee out of the land of Egypt, thou hast prepared a cross for thy Saviour. I fed thee with Manna in the desert, and thou hast beaten Me with buffets and stripes. I gave thee saving water to drink out of the rock, and thou hast drenched Me with gall and vinegar.' All the thoughts which crushed Him down to the ground, in His Agony in the Garden on the evening before, now crowd in upon Him and fill Him with grief. He feels as if abandoned by His Father, Who is exacting such a painful Sacrifice, and He calls out in a bitter cry of desolation. He thinks of the future eternal loss of so many souls, for each of which He is then suffering and dying, but which will not accept the graces He is meriting for them. He thought, my dear brethren, even of each of us: of you, of me, of each individual amongst us; and perhaps we added to His pain then, by our insensibility and our sinfulness now. And thus His soul is again sorrowful even unto death.

And do you remember that He was God all the while that He was thus hanging in sorrow upon the Cross? not man only, but God also. That must be true which St. Paul says, that *if the princes of this world had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of Glory.*[7] But the Lord of Glory was crucified, and it is He whom you see, as you look upon Him, Whom you have had a share in piercing. What could the good Angels have thought! Where were Michael and Gabriel, and all the faithful host who had driven the rebellious Lucifer out of Heaven? What can Angels ever think of man after the Crucifixion! For our dearest Lord became not an Angel to redeem angels who fell, but He became Man to redeem fallen man, and yet He is taken and crucified.

III. But, my dear brethren, it is time for me to be silent, and to give you the opportunity to elicit all the generous and loving act . and to form the good and practical resolutions, which the

[7] 1 Cor. ii. 8.

thought of the Crucifixion must suggest. What are you to do? What return can you make to Him for all that He has done for you, and for the striking proof of excessive love, as we may well feel it to be, which He has manifested in dying for you upon the Cross? One thing that you are required to do, and which I have been trying to help you to do, is to think upon this great truth. Do not forget it. Ungrateful must you be if you can ever do so; but how immensely ungrateful if you can do so to-day. See how the Church thinks upon, and how she feels, the mystery of the Crucifixion. What a solemn day is Good Friday to her! How unusual is her attitude to-day, and how exceptional her ceremonial! That which is unusual and exceptional strikes us, and therefore the Church speaks and appeals to us, not to be thoughtless, but with hearts full of deep and sorrowing feelings to go out with her to the place called Calvary, and to witness and ponder upon all the details of the awful Crucifixion.

And as you think deeply and feelingly upon this great fact, can you be unmoved? Look upon the Crucifix, and does not everything breathe love: the Hands stretched out and nailed to the hard wood: the Feet drilled through and streaming with Blood: the Breast laid bare and opened for you to approach: the Head bowed down as if beckoning and welcoming you forward. How often have you not, when striving to excite yourself to sorrow, and to move by an effort your heart which is cold and too unfeeling, —how often have you not at such times thought upon the Crucifixion, and at last succeeded in exciting contrition! And can you resist the appeal of to-day? It is the Church that puts the Crucifix before you, and almost defies you to resist its influence. She has kept it veiled for some days, in order that the solemn unveiling of it to-day might bring it with fresh novelty under your notice. And she will not have you look at it from a distance, as at other times, but to come up, look closely upon it, apply your lips to it, and allow your outward act and demeanour to express the feelings with which your heart is filled. Come, then, with sympathy: come with sorrow: come with gratitude: come with a generous and an active love.

What does your act of adoring and kissing the Cross signify? It expresses outwardly what you feel, or ought to feel, inwardly. It is something like a sacramental act: an outward sign of an inward reality. You are not to suppose that the act itself of kissing the Cross will bring a blessing to you, unless you are influenced by those inward dispositions which will give efficacy to it. But if you come up to do this pious work in the spirit in which the Church suggests it, transferring to Him Who was crucified for

you, the sign of love and adoration which you pay to His image, then you will receive a blessing, an increase of grace, and will be drawn more closely to Him in love and devotedness. Say at the time that you approach, that little prayer which is especially recommended and indulgenced: 'We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.' It will not then be a mere ceremonial act; it will be an act of obedience, of devotion, of gratitude, of faith, hope, and love. It will be received by Almighty God as an acknowledgment upon your part of an acceptance of graces which this day must bring to all who love the Cross, because they love Him who died upon it. And then the lessons of this day will teach you what it so much behoves you to know. The Death of your Jesus will be to you what He meant it to be, the cause of your life; and His Crucifixion will be the pledge, the price, and the cause of your glory.

SERMON XXVII.

EASTER SUNDAY.

He is risen: He is not here.

WHAT a feeling of wonder, and what a thrill of joy must have run through the souls of those devoted and loving friends and followers of our dear Lord, when upon going to visit, as they expected, the sacred Remains so cruelly mangled, they saw the beautiful and brilliant Angel, sitting by the side of the vacant tomb, and heard him announce to them the glad and glorious tidings of the Resurrection: *He is risen: He is not here!* They were filled with wonder; for although they had had intimations of His future Resurrection, which even His enemies had heard Him foretel, yet the ignominy and sufferings attendant upon His Death seemed to have put every other thought from out of their hearts. And close upon their wonder followed the joy, which the appearance and the cheering words of the Angel infused into them. And thus the sadness which oppressed them, as they were coming up early on that Sunday morning to do their work of love, in anointing and embalming with sweet spices the Body, Which they would have been glad to look upon once more, is suddenly dispelled. We can well understand the eager haste with which they would return into Jerusalem to make partakers of their joy, those whom they had left mourning and desolate. *Going they went and lamented, but coming they come in exultation,* bearing the burden of the glorious Gospel, the good tidings of the Resurrection. *He is risen:* He is no longer there.

Perhaps to us also there is a feeling of abruptness in the sudden transition from the gloom of Lent, and especially the deep sorrow of Good Friday, to the manifestations of joy made by the Church, and demanded of us, upon this most glorious Solemnity. But yet we are not to be surprised, or to feel ourselves unable to enter into the feelings which are in accordance with such a Festival. Easter ought not to come upon us unprepared. It has been for the very purpose of being prepared, that we have gone through the holy time of Lent, and have tried to be faithful to its

observances. And it has been in order to throw the glory of the Resurrection into more prominent relief, that we have been dwelling in sorrow upon the humiliations and ignominy of Calvary during the solemn days which we have now concluded. We have, therefore, laboured for the joy of Easter, and we have a right now to partake of it. Our dear Lord is now no longer in suffering and abjection; and so the words of the Angel are to be accepted by us, as they were by them to whom they were first spoken. It is not in sorrow we are to seek Him to-day. *He is risen: He is not here.*

Let us now, in accordance with the principle of all the Festivals, consider the fact as it was, and the commemoration as it is. To whom did the Resurrection give joy and glory when it actually occurred? And to whom is it, or ought it to be, giving joy and glory upon this day of its commemoration?

I. The Day of the Resurrection was a day of joy and glory to the Eternal Father. Of this day the Psalmist sang, as the Church repeatedly reminds us to-day, when he said in such joyful accents: *This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein.* For if the Eternal Father, in His Justice, demanded the painful Sacrifice of Good Friday, we can well understand with what joy He rewarded that act of humility and obedience by the glory of Easter Sunday. As He designed the Mystery of the Incarnation, and passed the decree of its fulfilment, He watched over each of its details, making each contribute its share to the Glory for which the Mystery was effected. It is He, then, who to-day welcomes His Son back again to life: who congratulates Him on the completion of His Sacrifice, and rewards Him with the gladness of the Resurrection. As at the beginning He had said: *Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee;* so now does He say: Thou art My Son, this day have I crowned and rewarded Thy obedience and fidelity. And the Holy Spirit, the bond of union between Father and Son, and the bond of union between souls in Grace and God the Author of Grace, He rejoices in the work of again uniting the Body and Soul, over whose formation He had originally presided, when He cooperated with the Virgin-Mother in the accomplishment of the Mystery by which the Word was made Flesh.

And to Him, of Whom the words were spoken by the bright Angel: *He is risen: He is not here*, what an event of joy and glory to Him was the fact of the Resurrection! He had well earned the glory, for He had purchased it by suffering. If it is true of us that by many tribulations we are to purchase our future glory, and that there will be no proportion between the weight of

that reward and our present sufferings which are to purchase it, what may we not think of the glory of the Resurrection! Henceforth He is to die no more: Death no more is to exercise power over Him. He has conquered death, and may well cry out in defiance, *Where is thy victory, where is thy sting?* The time of suffering has passed away, and now all things are made new. From Heaven the word of approval has been sounded forth, and the Son hears with greater joy than at His Baptism or Transfiguration, the expression of His Father's love: *this is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.*

To our dear Lord risen from the dead, this is a day of restitution and compensation. How changed is everything from what but a few days before had been His lot! In place of the insults and reproaches which were then heaped upon Him by men, He is now receiving a tribute of praise from the Angels. In place of the bitter desolation in which He was then plunged, songs of thanksgiving are chanted around Him. In place of abjectness and humiliations, He receives now the adoration of the whole court of Angels: for if on His first coming into the world Almighty God gave the Order: *And let all the Angels adore Him*,[1] how generously is that order, which had never been transgressed, continued and renewed when He again comes back into the world which He has just redeemed! In place of the sadness and fear which had accompanied Him in His Passion, succeeds triumphant jubilation. In a word, in place of, and in reward for, the obedience and humility required of Him when suffering, He receives the obedience and homage of all the court of Heaven, congratulating Him on His victory over sin and death.

And to His Mother: to her who had so loyally and constantly attended Him in His whole career of suffering, what a day of joy was that when she again saw Him restored to life, and coming once more to receive the proofs of her love! It is fitting that the Gospels should be silent upon His visits to her, or His abiding with her in the interval between the Resurrection and Ascension; because, having said nothing of the hidden Life before His preaching, it consistently is silent upon the renewal of that Life after the Resurrection. The words, *He is risen: He is not here*, were not addressed to her. She required no Angel to come again, and bid her not fear. He was not in the tomb, indeed, when the devout women heard the good tidings of the Resurrection. But where was He? Whilst the Angel spoke to others, was it not fitting that He should Himself go, and announce the glad fact to His own Mother, in order that He might witness her joy, and receive at

[1] Heb. i. 6.

once from her her warm words of welcome? What a change from her station at the foot of the Cross, is her position now by the side of her own Son, glorified and impassible! The Resurrection was not a secret from her during those bitter hours of desolation; and the knowledge that it was to take place, must have been the sustaining power which enabled her to go through her martyrdom in her days of sorrow. But now it is no longer an object of hope to her. She sees it; and with the love of the Spouse, in the Canticles, she may well exclaim: *I have found Him Whom my soul loveth: I have held Him, and will not let Him go.*[2] Does not the Church well express the sympathy we all feel with the once suffering but now happy Mother, in her beautiful Antiphon of the Regina Cœli, substituting it for the Angelus in the joyful Paschal season?

To the Angels, also, what a day of joy was that first Easter Sunday! Blessed and faithful Spirits, what an example had they been all along in their allegiance to the Incarnate Word! How had they not shown their loyalty to the Mystery, which, in bringing salvation to man, had contributed so much to their happiness! If they sang their songs of glory and peace over the poor ruined Stable of Bethlehem, when He first appeared outwardly upon earth, could they have been silent over that Tomb which witnessed the Resurrection? Immediately after His Death, He had become more than ever theirs. His disembodied Soul was guarded by them, as It went to preach to those in captivity, and proclaimed to the spirits of the just detained still from the beatific vision, that their Redemption was now completed, and that the happy and long-expected day was close at hand, when He was to ascend into Heaven, and to lead them forth in the majestic procession which was, at the time of His Ascension, to move forward into the realms of eternal bliss. Michael and Gabriel might well feel an increase of accidental glory, on that day of triumph to the Sacred Humanity, which they had so zealously defended against Lucifer and his rebel followers. And if, after His Temptation in the desert, *Angels came and ministered to Him*;[3] if, at the time of His Agony in the Garden, an Angel came and comforted Him;[4] if these blessed Spirits were so zealous in His defence, that He had only to ask His Father at the time of His Passion, and more than twelve legions of Angels would be at His command,[5] did they not now come to minister, and to congratulate, and to attend upon Him in the time of His triumph? Men saw them not, for no human eye witnessed the fact of the Resurrection; but they were

[2] Cant. iii. 4.
[3] Matt. iv. 11.
[4] Luke xxii. 43.
[5] Matt. xxvi. 53.

there faithful to their charge, and ready at the first moment to proclaim: *He is risen: He is not here.*

What are we to say about the Apostles? We might be inclined to condemn them for their timidity at the time of the Passion, when only one was found present at Calvary. But our merciful and loving Saviour did not condemn them, but allowed them to share in the glory of the Resurrection. The humiliation of Calvary was, indeed, a sore trial to them. They were not yet fully prepared for the duties of the Apostleship, but it was the Resurrection that was to confirm them and give them spirit. This was the Mystery they were in a short time to go and proclaim throughout the world, when the time was to arrive of which we are told in their Acts: *With great power did the Apostles give testimony of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.*[6] This fact was to bring home more clearly to them much of which they had before but an obscure and confused understanding. It was to teach them the dignity of their vocation: to show them what a great reward attended upon their rejection by the world, and upon their labours and sufferings. And they, who had never ceased to love Him—though they abandoned Him when in reality He wished them to be absent—were filled with an inexpressible joy when the good news reached them, and Magdalene and her companions announced to them: *He is risen.*

Magdalene, I have said; and what are we to say of her joy? How loving and devoted had she been, ever since the happy moment of her running in so obtrusively to the feast in the house of Simon the Pharisee! Many sins were forgiven her on that day, because of her love; and a still more perfect pardon and an increased measure of grace had been accorded to her, when with the Mother and the Disciple whom Jesus loved, she kept her position by the side of His wounded Feet upon Calvary. Did she not reckon upon embracing those Feet once more, when on that morning she went up with her companions to anoint the Body of Jesus? Disappointed in this, she is rewarded beyond her expectation, when she is told that He is risen, that He has triumphed over His enemies and over death, and that she is again soon to see Him, for that He had gone to be ready to meet His disciples and Peter in Galilee. The secret of the Resurrection had not been foretold to her, probably, as to the Virgin-Mother and the Apostles. *It is given to you to know the Mystery of the kingdom of God,*[7] had been said to the Apostles, not to her. With the Death which she had witnessed upon Calvary everything seemed lost to her: her only work would henceforth be, to go on visits

[6] Acts iv. 33. [7] Luke viii. 10.

to that Tomb and spend herself there in tears and acts of love. Every flower which spring would afford: every spice or ointment which the skill of man could extract and prepare, would have an Object on which to be bestowed. The early dawn would find her breaking in upon her rest; and the late night would have to drag her away unwillingly from the only spot she loved upon earth. The presence of rough soldiers would not scare her away from Him Whom her soul loved; nor would any stone be so heavy but that she would command strength enough to roll it back from the mouth of the Tomb. But it is not now to be so. She is to dry up her tears; for very soon she is again to see Him, to hear His voice calling her once more by her name, and bidding her to go and be the first Evangelist of the glorious Mystery of the Resurrection. What a day of joy was that first Easter Sunday, then, to those who at the time of the Resurrection knew the glad tidings announced by the Angel!

II. And to whom is Easter now a Festival of joy? Who loves now to hear the words proclaimed, *He is risen?* It is a day of joy and glory to the whole Church upon earth, who rejoices for the sake of Him who rose again, and for her own sake. You know what was the bitterness of her sorrow but two days ago, when she was living over again that day of affliction. She then mourned for Him at Whose Death she was assisting, and she asked all that passed by, to stay and see if ever there was sorrow like unto hers. If, then, she sympathised in His sorrows, can she, as she loves Him, help rejoicing on a day so full of glory to Him? *As you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you also be of the consolation*,[8] is the principle affirmed by St. Paul, and certainly experienced by the Church. The Life of Jesus is always being manifested by her, and not a single incident of it is allowed to pass, without eliciting from her the sympathy which it demands. She rejoices, then, because He is glorified; and she takes upon herself the office of the Angel, and everywhere announces the fact, *He is risen.*

And for her own sake she rejoices, because the glorious fact of the Resurrection is a stay and a comfort to her, and a pledge of her certain future victory. In the midst of her trials, however severe they may be, she looks back upon the Resurrection, and remembers what were the sorrows that preceded the triumph of that day. The world seemed for a time to be conquering, but it was at last subdued, and the victory was achieved over it upon that happy Easter Sunday. And so she looks forward to her own certain triumph, of which the Resurrection is to her a security and a pledge. She is militant now, but she is sure to be triumphant

[8] 2 Cor. i. 7.

hereafter. Upon this great Festival of joy, therefore, she does not hide the Crucifix. She displays it now as ever, and thus expresses her faith and her confidence in Him, Who conquered by dying and by rising again.

And the Church rejoices too upon this solemnity, because at this time so many thousands of her children, who at other times perhaps are but too negligent about the Sacraments, are brought to a profession of their obedience, and prove their fidelity by approaching to these channels of grace, in which they drink in joy from their Saviour's fountains. Angels, who rejoice whenever one sinner is brought to repentance, join now in the Church's joy, because so many who had been astray are brought home, and those that had been dead live again.

To the faithful obedient members of the Church, too, this is a day and an occasion of great joy. They have gone in good spirit, and so far as their strength would allow them, through the penitential austerities of Lent. They have fasted, and prayed, and watched. The forty days have been to them real holy days and days of salvation; and now at the end of them Angels come and minister to them, and announce to them tidings of great joy. He is risen, and they are to rise with Him. It was only to the good and loving friends and disciples that our Lord is recorded to have appeared after His Resurrection. We hear nothing more now of Scribes and Pharisees, of Herod and Pilate. To them our Lord does not appear. We may imagine what a triumph it would have been to Him to go to those who had plotted His Death, and who had carried out their wicked designs against Him. What would Pilate have thought if He had gone to him when surrounded by his court, and declared that the utmost had been done against Him: that He had been condemned, had suffered under Pontius Pilate, had died, but now was risen, and no longer in that tomb over which soldiers had been sent to watch? What would Herod have thought, who at the time of the Passion was glad to see Jesus, hoping to witness a miracle performed by Him, if he were to see such a miracle as to find Him who had been dead, once more standing in noble defiance before him? What would the Scribes and Pharisees and the cruel unworthy priests have thought if they had seen Him, Whom they had taunted with impotence upon the cross, answering their challenge, and proving His right to the Divinity which He had claimed, by giving them personal proof of His Resurrection, and showing them how little after all they could do, when they assembled and plotted together against the Lord and His Anointed One? It would seem to satisfy a human feeling of ours if our dear Lord had thus manifested Him

self to His enemies. But what are we taught by the fact that to His enemies He did not appear, but only to His friends and followers? We are taught that the Easter joys are for the faithful children of the Church, not for those who despise and disobey that Paschal law, obedience to which is a proof and a profession of orthodoxy.

It is to the obedient children of the Church that this is a day of joy, and amongst these some prominence must be given to penitents. Perhaps there are some amongst you who during this Easter indulgence have been gained back to the observance of duties long neglected, and by Confession and Holy Communion have at last done what the Church has anxiously been expecting from you for a lengthened period. It may have cost you an effort, but have you not been rewarded for it? There has been a struggle, perhaps a hard-fought battle between passion and duty, between self-indulgence which would have suggested further delay, and grace which urged immediate and earnest compliance. Thanks be to God, duty and grace have triumphed, and after the contest peace has succeeded. You are risen; you are no longer where you were before, in the tomb, the region of death and of separation from God. The Resurrection of your Jesus was the result of His obedience; your resurrection, and your return to God are the reward and the proof of your obedience.

This, indeed, is a day on which all past sacrifices made for God find a reward. It is a day on which all who have felt the pressure of the Cross, feel what a privilege it is to be allowed to suffer reproach for the Name and the cause of Him, Who is now glorified upon His rising from the grave. Converts, what do you not feel on this day of joy! You have had your trials: you have been set up as marks for contradiction: you have been slighted, or otherwise treated unkindly and ungenerously by those who would have kept you back from following the call of God and the dictates of your conscience. But what matters all this opposition now, when in your sympathy with your once suffering and now triumphant Saviour, you balance the blessing of membership with the Church against the cost you had to pay for it? Your only feeling to-day, when you think of this, is, that God demanded too little of you, and that you would have gladly suffered infinitely more, in order to secure the peace which is now your happy portion. *What shall I return to the Lord for all that He has bestowed upon me?*

It is a day, also, upon which present resolutions are especially encouraged and blessed; for it is a day on which the Grace of God is unusually busy in doing its ever holy and fruitful work. It

is the crowning day of an acceptable time and of days of salvation. In answer to so many thousands of holy Communions which have been, and are being, made to-day throughout the Church, our dear and generous Saviour, Who is present when two or three are gathered together in His name, pours out abundantly the treasures of His sacred Heart, and gives strength to those who ask it through His glorious Resurrection. Resolutions cannot be kept unless they are blessed by God; but to-day is a day when blessings overflow.

And the future, towards which we are all looking forward so anxiously, seems to-day more certain in its happy consequences to us. So much has been done for us: so many pledges have been given of God's love for us, and of the value He sets upon our soul, that we are filled with confidence as we look forward to what is before us. The Death and the Resurrection of Christ have both been for our benefit. *He died for our sins, and He rose again for our justification.* Supported, therefore, and encouraged by Him Who hath done such great things for us, we will go on steadily forward, looking to the blessed hope and the future coming of Him Who has now risen from the dead. And full of faith, and confidence, and love, we will resolve to persevere faithfully in the service of that good and loving God, Who gave His own Son to redeem us, and to gain for us our own future glorious Resurrection.

SERMON XXVIII.

LOW SUNDAY.

THE BLESSING OF PEACE.

Peace be to you! And when He had said this, He showed them His Hands and His Side.

It is in these words that the beloved Disciple, St. John, whose testimony is brought before us in the Gospel of this Sunday, records the salutation given by our Blessed Lord to His Apostles, on the occasion of His first visit to them on the evening of the Day of His Resurrection. The Apostles had already heard from others that their Lord had risen: Magdalene and her companions, who had been early in the morning to the tomb, had heard the Angelical announcement of His Resurrection, and had hurried to Jerusalem, and borne the good and glorious tidings; but as yet the Apostles themselves had not seen Him. On that Sunday evening, we find them clustered together; and it may have been for a double purpose. They may have been in expectancy of a visit. They knew He was once more alive; and although they may have thought themselves unworthy of any blessing, because of the faint-heartedness they had shown in the time of the Passion, yet they knew how good and forgiving He was, and they hoped a personal proof might be given to them of an event, of which they had had mysterious intimations during His Life, and a positive assurance from witnesses since His Death. And on this evening of the first Easter Sunday they were assembled together, also, *for fear of the Jews;* for so St. John, one of them, tells us. These Jews had only three days before crucified their Lord and Master, and were now meditating vengeance upon His followers, or at least so these followers may well have thought. And so they shut themselves up, out of sight, in the little room they had engaged for themselves: they fasten and bolt the doors which lead to it; and then occurs the wonderful event which they hoped for, and yet partly feared. Jesus comes in miraculously into the midst of them, presents Himself before them, and says to them: *Peace be*

to you. But this was not all. They might have thought it was a phantom, and not a reality; and so, *He showed them His Hands and His Side.*

Peace was His word of salutation: it was His blessing: it was His way of expressing the feeling which filled His Sacred Heart at that first meeting after such a solemn interval. How truly and how naturally may they have felt that they deserved another kind of address on His part: words of censure, and rebuke, and expostulation, instead of words of gentle and affectionate salutation! And these words are followed by an act which must have had a meaning: the showing of His wounds. As much as to say: This is the Price of that Peace which I have purchased for you: this is a proof of the sincerity with which I invoke this blessing upon you. There must, then, be a great blessing in Peace; and it must be a blessing especially associated with the Resurrection. Let us try and understand what it is; for it must concern us, inasmuch as the Church, by bringing before us this event to-day, seems to put herself in the place of our Blessed Lord, and us in the place of the Apostles. Lately she has been enacting the great event in which our Lord was wounded; and to-day she wishes us the blessing of those wounds, and showing them to us, says: *Peace be to you!*

I. What is Peace? what is this blessing bestowed by our dear Lord upon His disciples, and invoked now by the Church upon us? We know something of its meaning by having, perhaps, experienced its absence and its contradictory. We know what is meant by restlessness, anxiety, remorse, dissension, suspiciousness, jealousy, and other such feelings, which, when they are influencing us, disturb our soul and interfere with our happiness. There are instances of which we read, of men through the absence of peace being driven into madness and despair, and of even devising means to shorten their existence, in order, as they would think, to free themselves from misery. So was it with Achitophel, of whom we read in the Second Book of Kings, who through disappointment and envy at seeing other counsels followed in preference to his own, took away his own life; so with the unhappy King Saul; and so with the treacherous Judas. Loss of peace of mind is to the individual the greatest affliction, as war is the greatest scourge of a nation. But how great is that blessing which fills us when all is at rest within us, and we are able to run cheerfully on in the fulfilment of all the duties by which the days of our life are marked out: the blessing of Peace!

The great theologian of the Church, St. Thomas of Aquin, cites the authority of St. Augustine for the definition he gives of

Peace, when he calls it 'the tranquillity of order;'[1] and this definition will clearly show us how great a blessing it implies, and what must be the misery of its absence. There are three with whom this order must be kept in a state of tranquillity; and when it is disturbed in reference to any of these three, it ceases to exist, and peace is succeeded by conflict in the soul. We must keep tranquillity of order with God, with our neighbour, and with ourselves; by keeping this we shall have perfect *Peace*, that gift of the Holy Ghost, *which passeth all understanding*.[2] But if we in any way interfere with this order, we shall be paying the penalty of a loss of Peace.

Between ourselves and Almighty God there is an order which must be kept tranquil and undisturbed. The first of the ten commandments marks out for us what is this order, and how it is to be observed. The duties which result from our connexion with God, the connexion between the creature and the Creator, are Faith, Confidence, Love, Obedience, and Conformity to His Will. The act by which we deliberately violate any of these duties, and thus disturb the order of tranquillity which He has established, and which we must maintain,—such an act is at once visited by its punishment in the withdrawal of Peace. Doubt, which is the contradictory of Faith, is a torture to the soul. Despair and despondency, the opposite to Hope and Confidence, bring sadness and gloom upon us. St. Augustine, in his well-known saying, has told us how the absence of Love for God is a cause of uneasiness: 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our heart is ill at ease until it rest on Thee.' Disobedience to God's commandments is inconsistent with that beautiful saying of the Psalmist: *There is much Peace for those who love Thy law*.[3] And to fail in submitting our will to that of God by a want of due conformity and resignation, only makes the burden which presses upon us double in its weight, and the yoke which galls us more bitter in its pain. But to believe undoubtingly in all that God reveals to us, to cling to Him with an unshaken confidence, to give Him the full tribute of a generous and practical Love, to make His Commandments the rule and standard of our life and of every action, to guide and keep our will in perfect harmony with His, this is to preserve the tranquillity of order with God, and in such Peace we may well *sleep and take our rest*.[4]

And between ourselves and our neighbour there is an order which must be preserved in its tranquillity. The wise man reminds us, in speaking of God's dealings with man, that *He gave*

[1] 2. 2. quæst. 29, art. 1.
[2] Phil. iv. 7.
[3] Ps. cxviii.
[4] Ibid. iv.

to every one of them commandments concerning his neighbour;[5] and the moment this commandment is violated, order is disturbed and peace is sacrificed. The breaking of the law of love to our neighbour, from the fact that it is disobedience to God, at once accounts for the consequence which must follow. Whosoever forgets that he is bound by a sacred tie with his neighbour, not of natural or human origin, but of Divine dispensation and ordinance, forgets the way of peace, and by him it cannot be found. Whoever, therefore, treasures up ill-will against his brother; whoever refuses to hold out the hand of forgiveness to one with whom in the collision of life a misunderstanding may have arisen: *whoever sees his brother in want, and closes his bowels of mercy against him*,[6] and leaves him unaided in his time of anguish: whoever violates the law of subordination, by which some that are lower are subject to those whom the Almighty has placed in superiority above them: whoever, in one word, denies the principle, that the second law of Love, which concerns our neighbour, is like to the first, which concerns God, and offends against this law, disturbs the tranquillity of order,—and Peace is not and cannot be his portion.

To ourselves also we have duties, and in the observance of these duties consists that tranquillity of order which we must keep up within ourselves, if we value the blessing of Peace. A good conscience and the enjoyment of peace mean one and the same thing. When we follow the dictates of that inward monitor, which never fails to make us feel its sign of approval or disapproval, we are at peace with ourselves, and all is well. But if we disobey that voice, what Almighty God declared to Cain would be the consequence of such disobedience, is at once experienced by us, *sin is forthwith present at the door*;[7] and with sin peace is incompatible, for it is written, not in Sacred Scripture only, but on the conscience of every wilful sinner, *there is no peace to the wicked*.[8] *There is no peace to my bones before the face of my sins*,[9] was the exclamation of King David, referring to the time when he had lost peace of conscience by the commission of sin. All sins opposed to humility, meekness, holy purity, temperance, diligence in fulfilling the duties of our state: all or any of these at once disturb that order which, for our own internal tranquillity, it is our interest to maintain, and the consequent loss of Peace brings pain in its course. Is it not a blessing, then, to be able to preserve undisturbed the order which ought ever to subsist in our relation to God, to our neighbour and ourselves: in a word, to have that treasure which our Blessed Lord

[5] Ecclus. xvii. 12. [6] 1 John iii. 17. [7] Gen. iv. 7.
[8] Isaias xlviii. 22. [9] Ps. xxxvii.

wished to His Apostles when He said to them: *Peace be to you!*

II. No wonder that on His first manifestation of Himself after His Resurrection, He invokes the blessing of Peace, inasmuch as it was especially to bring Peace upon earth that He first vouchsafed to come amongst us. Among the titles given to Him by the Prophets was that of *Prince of Peace.*[10] When He was born into the world, it was at a period of universal peace. Angels sang His praises, and heralded forth the announcement that His coming was a cause of glory to God, *and on earth Peace to men of good will.*[11] And such indeed was the result of the wonderful Mystery of the Incarnation: it was a Mystery of reconciliation: the world, which unto that time had been in a state of discord with God, was brought into peace with Him. St. Paul beautifully tells us of the effect of His coming, when he says: *He is our Peace, Who hath made both one, breaking down the middle wall of separation; . . . and coming He preached Peace to them that were afar off and Peace to them that were nigh.*[12] It had been said of His Precursor that he was to go before Him to prepare His way, and *to direct our feet into the way of Peace.*[13] And this blessing was constantly in the mind of our dear Lord and upon His lips. To His disciples He says: *Peace I leave to you: My Peace I give unto you.*[14] It was the object of His teaching, as He elsewhere says: *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have Peace.*[15] And over Jerusalem He weeps, because that unhappy, though much-privileged, city would not know the things that were for her peace.[16]

And the Church which He founded, and to which He assigned a perpetual and an universal office throughout the world, was ever to be preaching and labouring in the cause of Peace. The Prophet foretold the work of the Evangelists of the new law when he exclaimed in admiration, as St. Paul cites him: *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of Peace!*[17] To His first followers our Lord gives the commission: *Into whatsoever house you shall enter, first say: Peace be to this house!*[18] This certainly is the blessing nearest and dearest to the heart of the Church. These words are the ones literally used by her ministers when they enter the houses of their people to minister to the sick and the dying. In the holy Sacrifice at which you are now assisting, you will in a few moments be uniting with the Priest when he will be begging of God, that He will dispose our days in His Peace. In her Litanies and solemn processions she begs that God will

[10] Isaias ix. 6. [11] Luke ii. 14. [12] Eph. ii. 14, 17.
[13] Luke i. 79. [14] John xiv. 27. [15] Ibid. xvi. 33.
[16] Luke xix. 43. [17] Rom. x. 15. [18] Luke x. 5.

grant to Christian Kings and Princes peace and true concord. At the end of the Divine Office she constantly begs that God will give us His Peace; and amongst her collects she fixes one, which in our own days we have so frequently been called upon to repeat earnestly, in favour of Peace. Not upon the living only, but upon the dying and the dead, we learn from her to invoke the affectionate blessing that they may rest in Peace. Thus the Church is always faithful in the work assigned to her, of continuing to spread the blessings of the Incarnation, and prominently the blessing of Peace. She labours for it in her ministry: she suffers for it at the hands of the world, as the peaceful lamb suffers in the midst of wolves: she prays for it in her Liturgy: and she bestows it in her Sacraments, for these channels of Grace are necessarily channels of Peace also.

Yet is there not a saying of our Blessed Lord which demands an explanation, inasmuch as it seems to contradict what we have stated as the object of His mission? You remember, my dear brethren, a saying of His, in which He declares that His was not a mission of Peace, but of War. *Do not think*, He says, *that I have come to send Peace upon earth: I have not come to send Peace, but the sword.*[19] Is not this in contravention of what He says to-day: *Peace be to you?* Yet there must be a reconciliation between these two sayings; for our Lord, Who is Truth itself, cannot be at variance with Himself, but must be consistent. How are we to reconcile them? The task is not difficult, and it will have for its result, what the study of His words always has, the strengthening still more of what He does affirm. We reconcile them by His own explanation. He tells us that there is a kind of Peace which He does not give, and another Peace which He does give. *Peace I leave with you, My Peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth do I give unto you.*[20] There is, therefore, a peace of the world, an unreal and a false peace: that of which the Prophet Jeremias speaks, when he says: *Peace, Peace, and there was no Peace!*[21] You know how often we are reminded that they who would be friends of the world are enemies to God: they have peace with God's enemies, and therefore they have no share in God's Peace. This is a peace which is not a blessing, because it comes not from God, Who alone is the source of every blessing. The peace which the world gives is a peace of indolence, of self-indulgence, of yielding to the policy and false maxims of the world, of human respect. It is not a Peace purchased by efforts and self-sacrifice, and to be found at the foot of the Cross, and associated with the sacred wounds of our Blessed Redeemer. It certainly is

[19] Matt. x. 34. [20] John xiv. 27. [21] Jer. vi. 14.

not that of which our Lord speaks to-day, when He first said: Peace be to you; and then showed His wounds.

Show me, then, the rich man who has peace in his riches, and I must remind him how unreal that peace is, because it will be snatched from him at that hour of which the wise man says: *O Death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions!*[22] And show me a poor man, who perhaps knows not the value of his poverty, and is tempted to repine at his state, and I will give him comfort by reminding him of the blessings of a state chosen in preference to all others by our dear Lord, Who had all states placed before Him, and who cast His lot with the poor. Or take again those who are called upon to make sacrifices for the Faith, upon whom the judgment of the world pronounces cruelly, because they have followed the voice of conscience in submitting to an authority whose claims to their allegiance have been brought home to them with a certainty that they cannot resist, and let them be assured that there is a yoke which is sweet and a burden which becomes light, because it is imposed by Him who declares that thus we shall find rest to our souls. Or take, once more, those who suffer from what seems most of all opposed to Peace: namely, from a state of mental trials, in which either in prayer or in the performance of other duties to God all seems dark and irksome, and there is felt to be a share in that Desolation of our Blessed Lord, which made Him bow Himself down under its pressure in Gethsemani, and call out aloud on the Cross: *My God! My God! why hast Thou abandoned Me?* Is it difficult even in such a state to be in peace, when the trial is accepted in a spirit of resignation to the Will of Him Who sends it, and Who is sure to reward submission by the comfort which always attends upon the patient soul? It is God's Will it should be so: He sends these trials, severe as they may seem to us, in order to avert a heavier calamity, which might result from self-satisfaction or spiritual pride. Conformity of our own will to His, will be preserving the tranquillity of order in which Peace consists; and so that which may appear so opposed to Peace is thoroughly consistent with it: not with such a peace as the world gives, but with that which is invoked as a blessing when the Church uses the words of the Apostle, and exhorts us not to be over-anxious, but to allow *the Peace of God . . . . to keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus*.[23]

The saying of our Blessed Lord, therefore, and the act which attended it, must be taken together, and we thus shall understand the blessing and the nature of that Peace purchased for us by the

[22] Eccles. xli. 1. [23] Phil. iv. 7.

Passion and Resurrection, and given to us here below as a preliminary to the blessing of eternal Peace reserved for us hereafter. Peace after wounds was a principle affirmed in the Person of our Blessed Lord. Peace after wounds and suffering is a principle always affirmed and manifested in the Church. She is militant and laborious first: glorious, triumphant, and at rest afterwards. So must it be with ourselves. We want the blessing of Peace, for it is everything to us; but we must purchase and earn it; and little claim can we have to it, little right to expect it, unless we first of all do what lies in our power, and what is demanded of us as followers of One Who was crucified, and Who thus gained the blessing of Peace for Himself, and the right to bestow it upon His children. Courage, then, and go resolutely forward! There is a crown reserved for you; but it is a crown of victory, which demands and deserves a previous struggle. Fight for it during your period of probation, and it must be and will be yours. Show your wounds, which you have endured in your noble contest; and when the time comes which is fixed for you by the merciful and just Judge, Who is one day to reward you, He will acknowledge your claim, and will listen gladly to the prayers which the Church will send up in fervent affection, when, at the time of your death and passage into eternity, pious supplications will be offered up in your behalf, that you may gain a reward after your labours, and that your soul may speedily rest in Peace.

SERMON XXIX.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

I am the good Shepherd.

The Church, in bringing before us upon this Sunday the beautiful and encouraging words of our dear Lord, in which He describes Himself as the good Shepherd, is animated by the same spirit which made Him speak those words. For now, on the completion of the Easter solemnity, and of the period assigned for the fulfilment of the duties connected with that solemnity, she seems to be passing in review what she has done, and rejoices when she thinks of the souls whom she has gathered around her. She tells of the love of Him, Who came down from Heaven to redeem these souls, and Who, in the days of His ministry, went about so zealously seeking for sinners, and bringing them into His fold; and as she has succeeded to His work, and has inherited His character, she also rejoices as she numbers those whom she has gained to her obedience, and sees walking on, on their way to Heaven. She, like her Divine Founder, cannot avoid making an allusion to those who may have withstood all her persuasiveness, and by an omission of their duties have separated themselves from her fold, and are gone astray from her tender care. But even of these she will not despair; but she hopes, by patience, and watchfulness, and prayer, at last to bring these to the home to which she is ever trying to attract them; that as she is their one shepherd, she may secure them within the one fold.

It will increase our love and confidence towards our dearest Lord, will move us to acts of thanksgiving for what He has done for us, and will urge us to pray and interest ourselves for the conversion of sinners, if we think upon His dealings towards sinners. We will consider how He seeks for them when astray, and how He receives them on their return.

I. The saying of our merciful Saviour in the Gospel of St. John, from which this day's Gospel is taken, in which He calls

Himself the Good Shepherd, is meant to affirm of Himself what He says of the love and solicitude of the good shepherd in the beautiful parable, given in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke. There he is represented as going to seek for one sheep which has gone astray. All his anxiety is about that one. The rest of the flock seems to be for a time forgotten; for he leaves them in security, and goes after the poor wanderer. And as our blessed Lord is Himself this good Shepherd, where is the flock, and where is the wanderer after which He is in search? His flock are those of whom He says: *I know Mine, and Mine know Me;* and this flock is to be increased by the addition of those, who will be brought into the fold, by an act of obedience in hearing His voice, and following Him. The stray sheep after which the good shepherd in the parable goes so anxiously in quest, is one which was once in the fold, but has escaped, has broken through the fence, which was meant, not to keep it in bondage, but to protect it against the wolf, which would otherwise so soon seize and destroy it.

Who, then, is the sinner after whom our blessed Lord shows such tender and patient love, and for whose return He is so solicitous? He is one who has known what it is to be a child of God and of His Church: who has received the graces and blessings bestowed in the various Sacraments of which he has been a partaker: who has conversed with God in prayer, has been listened to, and rewarded: over whom angels have looked, in the happy days of his obedience, as on one of their own, destined for, and giving signs of a hope of being one day associated more intimately with them. But the time has come when all these holy and happy links are severed, and all good motives are forgotten. A temptation has been deliberately assented to, and a grievous sin committed. This has been followed by others, and a habit of sin perhaps has been contracted. Prayer has become burdensome, and has been gradually neglected and omitted. The Sacraments have demanded too great an effort, and have been abandoned. All the claims which Almighty God has upon his allegiance and love, as Creator, Redeemer, and Preserver, have been slighted. The laws of the Church, binding under such severe and awful penalties at this Paschal season, have been transgressed; and the sinner has become just like the sheep gone astray. He has broken away from obedience and control, and is exposed to the fearful dangers from which nothing but a returning to his duty can possibly secure him. Only, the poor sheep has wandered unconsciously; but the sinner has transgressed with full deliberation, after weighing the comparative claims of God and His ene-

mies; and with a full knowledge of the consequences, has turned towards these enemies, and has abandoned the God Who made him for Himself.

Yet with such a sinner God is patient. We might imagine, when we remember how the sinner outrages the attributes of God, that justice would at once overtake him, avenge the cause which has been attacked by his disobedience, and that punishment would quickly attend upon his disloyalty. But what does our good God say? *I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*[1] In His great mercy Almighty God even to such an one holds out the promise of pardon at whatsoever moment the sinner returns to Him. Like the father of the Prodigal He is always looking out for His wayward child, and is ready to receive and welcome him, upon his giving signs of sorrow and of a desire to return to his home. Thus there is this contrast between God and the sinner during the time of separation. God is always longing for reconciliation, and the sinner is resisting. Yet God, so willing to pardon, is the offended one: the sinner, so rebellious, is the one who has offended, and who deserves the punishment. For, what is the case with ourselves, when we are injured or offended? How quick we are to resent, and how slow oftentimes in forgiving! What an example does our good God give in His patience in waiting for the return of the sinner who offends Him!

Not only does God wait, but He does more; He goes in search of the sinner, and invites him to reconciliation. For the first step in the conversion of a sinner is always made by God. It is He who gives the grace which moves the sinner to enter into himself: it is He who excites in the heart of the sinner that feeling of remorse and torture of conscience, which convinces him that it is an evil and a bitter thing to have abandoned the Lord his God. What do the laws and the practice of worldly honour, as it is called, require and insist upon in those differences which arise only too frequently amongst those, whom it is so good and so pleasant to see living in harmony together? The one who offends is the one who is required to make the first advances, and to offer the apology. And especially is this required when the one who has been the aggressor is below the injured one in station and in character. Human nature is too ready to suggest a thousand reasons to justify the feelings of indignation or revenge, which the offering of an insult excites. Self-respect, honour, the good opinion of others, the practice of society, and suchlike motives are appealed to in justification of a refusal to be satisfied

[1] Ezech. xxxiii. 11.

until the apology has been made. And when made, how coldly and unwillingly is it oftentimes accepted!

But what is the conduct of the great God Whom the sinner, so degraded and so despicable, dares to offend? He makes the advances. He calls upon the offending one to come and renew the friendship which has been broken in upon through the deliberate act of the sinner. He whispers through the quiet voice of conscience, unheard by others, but distinctly enough felt by the poor erring one. He moves preachers to denounce the ingratitude and malice of sin, with the hope that the soul about which He is so anxious may be impressed and drawn away from its dangerous state. He excites in the sinner's mind the recollection of the awful truths of eternity, and strikes him with the presence of the truth of what is lost, if the soul is lost, and of what is to be gained, if he will only return to his duty. It is not too late even now, his God tells him. *I have been holding out My hands all the day*, He says, *to an unbelieving people, who walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts.*[2] And why does He thus strive to attract them? *Cease to do perversely*, He answers: *learn to do well . . . and then come and accuse Me, saith the Lord. If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool.*[3]

By how many parables and encouraging words and acts does not our dearest Saviour assure us that this is God's way of dealing with the sinner? The saying in this day's Gospel: *I am the Good Shepherd*, is enough of itself to show what was the office undertaken by our blessed Lord, when He came from His Father to redeem and to reconcile sinners. Isaias had foretold of Him, what was to be His tender and affectionate care of those He was to gather about Him. *He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather together the lambs with His arm, and shall take them up in His bosom, and He Himself shall carry them that are with young.*[4] Having come down from Heaven on purpose to save sinners, He does not hesitate to declare that this was His special object, and that sinners had a peculiar claim upon His love. When the self-satisfied Pharisees, who considered themselves just, and despised others as sinners, found fault with Him because of His labouring in behalf of these sinners, see how He justifies His conduct: *Go then*, He saith to them, *and learn what this meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice; for I am come not to call the just, but sinners.*[5] And does He not call them, when in such tender words of invitation He says: *Come to Me*,

[2] Is. lxv. 2.
[3] Ibid. i. 17, 18.
[4] Ibid. xl. 11.
[5] Matt. ix. 13.

all you that labour and are heavy-burdened, and I will refresh you?[6] With what reason, then, did not St. Paul, who had experienced and had obeyed the call, say of our dear Lord's coming upon earth: *A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief.*[7]

And as if His mere sayings were not enough, see how strikingly He describes His own character, and the work of the Good Shepherd in many of His beautiful parables. Turn to the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke, which is so rich in these parables. The Pharisees had just repeated their old charge against Him: *This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*[8] And what is His answer? He gives three parables in succession. He tells of a certain shepherd tending his flock of a hundred sheep, and finding that one has got astray, he goes anxiously in search after it, leaving the ninety-nine apparently neglected, until he succeeds in bringing back the missing one; and then he calls together all his friends and neighbours to partake of his joy, not because he had kept ninety-nine safe out of the hundred, but because he had rescued one single one that for a time had been lost. And then He tells of the poor woman, who had lost one little piece of money out of a small sum that she had saved up, and how eagerly she searched for it, and how she rejoiced and sought for congratulation upon finding it. Next He goes on to give that most encouraging story of the prodigal son, who so thoughtlessly and wickedly emancipated himself from the authority of the best of fathers, and is at last forced by misery to return to his old and cherished home; and how the father's joy is so great and demonstrative, as to provoke the wonder and jealousy of the elder brother, who had never transgressed, and yet for a time seems to hold the second place only in the father's affection, which is absorbed exclusively in showing signs of the warmest welcome to the one who had been lost, but had been found again—had been dead, but is once more restored to life. And twice the moral is repeated, that *there is joy before the angels in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance.*[9]

These were not to be imaginary cases, and in many individual instances we find them realised. For what was the conduct of our dear Lord in seeking for a single soul, just as the good shepherd sought for a single sheep? You see Him at a banquet in the house of Simon the Pharisee. There are many present; for His disciples are guests as well as Himself. But one, an

[6] Matt. xi. 28.
[7] 1 Tim. i. 15.
[8] Luke xv. 2.
[9] Ibid. xv. 7 and 10.

uninvited one, comes in inopportunely, and seems to break in upon the course of the feast. It is the poor sinner Magdalene. It is her first interview with Him, Whom she was afterwards to know so familiarly. All the rest are forgotten, and towards her His whole attention is directed. She comes in a sinner, but she leaves a penitent and a saint. And at another time, engaged with His disciples in their missionary work, He allows Himself to be separated from them for a time, but it is because another sinner is coming to be gained; and as He is resting by the side of a well, He converts and absolves the poor Samaritan sinful woman. In the same way, when there is a great crowd about Him, admiring and following Him, He forgets them all, to bestow His care upon the earnest publican Zacheus, who declares aloud his repentance, and his determination to be reckoned amongst His followers. And when dying upon the Cross, before addressing Himself even to His Mother and the Disciple whom He loved, He engages Himself with the penitent thief, to whom He promises a quick admittance into Paradise. Does not He Who did all this, deserve the name of the Good Shepherd?

The name and character has not been forfeited, and the office has not been abandoned. The work of the Good Shepherd is still going on. He Who said to His Church: *Behold, I am with you all days, even to the end of the world*, is still actively and affectionately engaged, and is seeking for wandering souls. Through the ministry of the Church, in which He has left the gift of zeal, He is waiting with all the patience, and labouring with all the devotedness of pastoral love, to recover those that are astray. Hence the anxiety of the Church to-day, and her affectionate and fervent appeal through the Gospel of the Good Shepherd. It is the Church who now says: *I am the good shepherd.* She knows whom she has secured, and she is thankful for having secured them; but she also knows who are still astray. She knows who are those *other sheep*, who are not at present in her fold. Some have not been to their Easter duties. They are separated from her: they were hers once, but they have gone out from her. She laments over them: she prays for them: as far as she can she argues with them, and calls upon them to return. She reminds them of the evil and danger of separation: she uses many arguments; but one she feels to be a powerful one beyond others, and that is the argument of the Good Shepherd. She has the will and the power of this Good Shepherd: she has succeeded to His work: His Spirit is infused into her; and the power to reconcile sinners, and restore them once again to the friendship of God and to privileges which had been lost, abides with her,

and is to abide for ever. When she seeks you, do not resist her. The sheep know the voice and the call of the shepherd: her voice is not, and ought not to be, strange to you.

II. The good shepherd seeks in loving anxiety for his one stray sheep; and how does he treat it when he finds it? There is no sign of harsh treatment or cruelty. His first feeling on recovering it, is not anger because he had lost it; but joy because he has found it: *he lays it upon his shoulders rejoicing, and coming home he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost.* And so does our good and most forgiving God infuse joy into the Church upon earth, and increase the accidental joy of the Angels in Heaven, when a sinner returns from the evil ways he had been pursuing. *There shall be joy before the Angels of God over one sinner that doth penance.* For as the shepherd sees that the poor stray sheep, now recovered, is still a sheep and a member of his flock, Almighty God sees in the rescued sinner a child of His own, bearing His image, one created for a high and noble end, even the possession of Himself, redeemed at the great Price of the most Precious Blood of His own Son; one that had been a partaker of Sacraments, upon whom many special signs of love had been lavished, and upon whom He is ready again to repeat these tokens of His goodness. Was our dear Lord hard upon Magdalene, when she was received upon her conversion? Was He hard upon St. Peter, or upon Zacheus, or upon the poor sinful woman brought to Him in the temple, or upon the dying thief upon the Cross? Try Him, my dear brethren; and if you are astray and have been disobedient, see whether He will not, through the ministry of the Church, receive you again as a child, and love you as before. His own honour and glory are promoted by the conversion of a sinner; and therefore it is that He welcomes the act so lovingly.

To what is it that the sinner is restored by God upon his conversion? This will show how generous He is, and that to His Mercy there is indeed no limit. Grace which had been lost is recovered again: accumulated merits, which had all been sacrificed in the dreadful state of mortal sin, are once more given back: the Holy Ghost, Who had been driven away, and Who cannot keep up His abode in a soul given to sin, comes back, and again makes that forgiven soul His temple: Sacraments, from which the sinner had shrunk, and of which he had been unworthy, again bring their riches to strengthen and adorn that soul; and Heaven, which had been closed against it, is opened again, and is ready to receive it. Are not these signs of welcome? And they

really will be extended to you, if you will only listen to Him Who invites you to receive them. Be not afraid, then, as if you were to be rejected, when such assurances are made in order to encourage you to return.

Why does the sinner hesitate to act upon the pressing invitation that is given to him? He has so many sins to atone for, he says, and he is almost inclined perhaps to feel with Cain, that they are too great to be forgiven. In answer to such a cause for hesitation, we can point to a love and mercy which are great enough to cover every sin. Or he has so many years to go over and to compensate for, and therefore he shrinks from the task of conversion. But has not God shown that He has had patience in waiting all these years? And why has He waited, except that the time might at last come, when the repeated movements to return would produce their effect, and the sinner would be brought to repentance? But, says the poor sinner, there is so much ingratitude in all that I have done, and how can I dare to expect a welcome? There is ingratitude, indeed, in refusing the call now made to you, but no ingratitude in accepting it, when you know that the acceptance will give joy to God, to the Angels, and to the whole Church upon earth. If God bore with you when you were impenitent, will He not bear with you and embrace you upon your repentance? For your benefit He has left with His Church the power of forgiving sins; and He has infused at the same time His own merciful spirit into the ministers of this Sacrament, fitting them for their work, and teaching them with all love and kindness to seek for sinners, and to receive them with every sign of encouragement upon their return.

Do not doubt the Church, my dear brethren, for you know that she is divinely instituted. She has the power and she has the will to receive you. She knows the value of souls, and like the Good Shepherd who tells us that He lays down His life for His sheep, she is willing to make every sacrifice in behalf of those for whom her Founder did die. She has pastoral duty imposed upon her, that is to say, the duty of a shepherd; and therefore she has the instinct of the shepherd, which makes her seek with anxiety when she loses a sheep, but welcome with joy when she recovers it. Even if there were no shepherd to go in quest of you, when you happen to be astray, yet so great is the danger of your erring, that you ought to do all in your power to find your way back to the only security for your safety, which is, being in the fold. But there is a pastoral heart and eye ever over you, and therefore do not doubt the voice which calls you anxiously home. Will any one still keep away, when such motives exist to

encourage him to return? What ought not to be the measure of his punishment, when appeals of love are allowed to pass unheeded?

We must all pray: pray for ourselves, and for others that the office of the Good Shepherd may never in our regard be slighted through our neglect. Let us pray for Perseverance, that we may hear the voice which calls us to remain obedient and faithful within the fold. And let us pray that if ever, which God forbid! we should, by transgressing the law of the Church, put ourselves outside of the fold, we may at once, upon hearing the voice which calls us back, recognise and follow it. And for all who have not obeyed: for those especially of our own immediate neighbours, who may still have left unfulfilled a duty which they know is so solemnly binding upon them, for them let us send up one earnest fervent prayer, that they may be brought speedily back to the fold from which they have wandered by their disobedience, and that theirs may be the blessing which St. Peter pronounces upon us in the Epistle of to-day: *You were as sheep gone astray, but you are now converted to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

SERMON XXX.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH.

Jesus was beginning about the age of thirty years, being (as it was supposed) the son of Joseph. Luke iii. 23.

To-day, my dear brethren, the Church breaks in upon her ordinary Sunday Liturgy, in order to celebrate a special Solemnity in honour of the Patronage of St. Joseph. It is one of the Sundays in Paschal time, which she has chosen for the celebration of this Festival. And however unconnected at first sight may appear the history and memory of this venerable and privileged Saint with the joys of Easter, yet the fact of the Festival being appointed for this season suggests of itself that there is an appropriateness in the choice: inasmuch as the Church, in the disposal of her solemnities, is under the influence of the Spirit of Wisdom, Who guides her in all her acts, and inspires the motive of each of her ordinances. St. Joseph witnessed not upon earth either the bitter Passion or the glorious Resurrection of our blessed Lord. He had been called away to rest with his fathers some time during the Hidden Life at Nazareth: when, it is not recorded. But he was spared all the anguish of Calvary, and it was not given to him to share in the after glories of the bright and joyful days of the Resurrection. Yet the Church sees this fact, and seems to bring it before us by appointing one of the Sundays after Easter for a Festival in honour of St. Joseph; that as the venerable Patriarch was upon earth a prominent sharer in the humiliations of the Incarnate Word, his name ought therefore to be associated with Its glories. His Festival on the 19th of March always comes in Lent, in a season incompatible with joy; and therefore there is given an occasion in these days of joy, and on a Sunday, for the greater encouragement of the devotion of the faithful, to congratulate him on the glory, which, by his relationship to our

blessed Redeemer and by his fidelity in the duties thus implied, he has gained for himself in the kingdom of God upon earth and in heaven. We follow the spirit of the Church, therefore, when we turn our thoughts towards him, whose Name and Patronage we are now celebrating.

You know, moreover, that our Holy Father Pius IX., in answer to an appeal made by earnest petitioners from many quarters of the globe, has since the assemblage of the Vatican Council, named St. Joseph to an office, which his connexion upon earth with the Founder of the Church, stamps as being peculiarly suited for him: the office of Patron of the Universal Church. The Festival has, therefore, now an additional claim upon our devotion, and must, we have every confidence, bring with it additional blessings and graces. We shall see what is the power of his Patronage, if we realise what he was upon earth, and what, in consequence of his office and his fidelity, he has now become in Heaven.

I. The office which St. Joseph bore upon earth, as resulting from his connexion with the Incarnate Word, was an exceptional office, as that connexion was exceptional. None, except the Immaculate Mother of our Lord, was so close to His Person, and so constantly within the influence of that virtue which in the home of Nazareth, as well as in the streets of Jerusalem, was ever going forth from Him, sanctifying as well as healing those who came into His sacred Presence. Though not actually Father, but, as our text reminds us, being only supposed as such, to the Son of God and the Son of Mary the Virgin-Mother, yet he had the honour, the name, the office, the dignity, and the authority of Father. Our dear Lord acknowledged him by that name, and Mary called him by it; for so we read on the occasion of the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, that when the anxious Mother, upon recovering Him, after that most painful three days' separation, asked Him why He had left them, she spoke of Joseph in terms accepted by both of them, saying: *Thy Father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.*[1] And he exercised the office and authority also; for Jesus submitted to it, going down to Nazareth and being subject to His parents, and thus acknowledging by His humble obedience, that Joseph upon earth was using the power delegated by His Father in Heaven. What an honour to St. Joseph, that that same Son who at one time said: *I do the will of My Father, Who is in Heaven*, should also be subject to him, and do his will as that of His father upon earth!

Another of the Divine Persons was also represented by St.

[1] Luke ii. 48.

Joseph. In effecting the Mystery of the Incarnation, the coöperation of the Holy Ghost with the Virgin Mother was declared by the Archangel Gabriel as the mode of accomplishment. Who is it that upon earth represents this work? It is St. Joseph. What the Holy Ghost really did, he seemed in the eyes of man to have done; and so he bore outwardly, as Spouse of the Blessed and Immaculate Mother of our dear Lord, the place of Him who gave to her the honour of Maternity. Through St. Joseph, her Virginity was preserved entire, though as yet men knew it not. Does not honour thus become added to honour in the person of this glorious Patriarch? In relation to the Son of God made man, he has the honour, as our text affirms, of being supposed to be the Father, and he exercises the office: he has the honour of representing the work of the Holy Ghost; and to the Virgin-Mother he serves as a shield, protecting the integrity of her Virginity, and securing external honour to her Maternity. Thus we may truly say of him that he was in some manner a Sacrament: an outward sign of an inward reality: the sign of Father to the Eternal Son, and the sign of Spouse to the Immaculate Virgin-Mother.

From his office upon earth, see what privileges resulted as a consequence and as a recompense. First, he had the great grace and privilege of the constant companionship of Jesus and Mary. When the Child Jesus *went down to Nazareth* with His parents, *and was subject to them*, the Home was established in which that earthly Trinity dwelt, of which the three Persons who formed it were so affectionately bound together. There, whilst Joseph by the labour of his hands, in his trade as a carpenter, was providing for the wants of Child and Mother, from each of them he was constantly receiving pledges of love and gratitude. And how rich must this companionship and this holy intercourse have made him in grace and virtue! What an honour, though it was such a responsibility, to find the timid Mother in her anxiety about her Child, coming to him and clinging for advice and shelter! The necessity of the Flight into Egypt in His earliest Infancy, is a proof of the plots and persecutions which were directed against that Life; and oftentimes must the recollection of the words of the aged Simeon have come before the mind of Joseph, for he was in the Temple when they were spoken, and filled him with apprehension as to His safety, even in the retirement of Nazareth. But Egypt with Jesus and Mary was better than Jerusalem without them, and even exile must have been shorn of its bitterness in such company.

Then there was for him from the circumstances in which his privileged destiny had placed him, the facility, the natural and

necessary facility, of a pure intention in all that he did. How much do we lose, and how careless are we oftentimes in trying to gain what we may secure, with reference to this purity of intention! 'All for Jesus,' which ought to be our motto, was and must have been the inspiring motive of every act of this venerable Patriarch. The love which he bore for that Divine Child, and which went on increasing as the Child *grew in grace and wisdom*, and the loyal devotedness by which he was bound to his Virgin-Spouse, sweetened all his toil, and encouraged him in every trouble and anxiety. The apostolical admonition: *Whatever you do, do all for the Lord Jesus*,[2] was, as a matter of course, the rule of his life, and it bore with it its fulness of reward. Such was his life; but what must have been his death?

Here is another glorious privilege of the happy St. Joseph. Well does the Church exhort us to ask for the grace of a happy death through his intercession. Our prayer indeed may be, but with more sincerity than his whose lips first uttered it: *Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to his!*[3] What must have his death been, when his attendants were Jesus and Mary! If those whom we love, come and try to comfort us at such an hour, are we to suppose that he was left uncared for, or that they were unmindful of all they owed to that diligent and solicitous Father of the house? With tears it may have been, with love and tenderness it must have been, they ministered then in their turn to all the wants of the dying Patriarch, and received his last breath when he was passing away to be gathered to his fathers. What efficacy must there not be in that indulgenced prayer! and how often shall we not recite it for ourselves to-day, as we love to recite it for those whom it may befal us to attend in their last moments: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, assist me in my last agony!

Another feature which we must consider in St. Joseph, when fulfilling his destiny upon earth, is presented to us in his virtues. Humility, the great virtue of his Child, with all its attendant virtues, poverty, retiredness, silence, and obedience, mark his character. Descended from the royal stock of Judah, in the direct line of David, Solomon, Ezechias, and Manasses, as we read in his genealogy in the opening of the Gospel of St. Matthew, yet he is but poor, almost an outcast, and forced to support himself in a lowly trade. He was fit to act as Father to One of Whom the Prophet had said: *I am poor and in labours from my youth.* His home was a place proverbially insignificant, for Nathanael seems to have been quoting a proverb, when he said upon being invited

[2] Col. iii. 17. [3] Balaam, Num. xxiii. 10.

to follow our Lord: *Can anything good come from Nazareth?*[4] So silent and retired was he, that not a single word of his is recorded in the Gospel history; for even on the one occasion on which we might have expected him to have spoken with the authority of a father, on the finding of the Child after the three days' separation, it is not he, but the Mother who asks: *Why hast Thou done so to us?*[5] And obedience, the outward proof of humility, never seems to cost him an effort, or to call for an argument or an expostulation. It is always in his sleep even, that the Angel comes to give his orders, to fly from home or to return, and the command is promptly executed. Father, Mother, and Child, at once are on the move: he leading the way, and practising a virtue so dear to all three. Such was St. Joseph upon earth, privileged and honoured beyond all the kings and patriarchs who had gone before him.

II. If he was such upon earth, have we not a principle established for us, by which we can judge of his position in Heaven, and consequently of the power of his Patronage?

If it is the case, as we know by faith that it is, that the Mystery of the Incarnation has purchased the salvation and the glory of all the Saints in Heaven, may we not expect that one so intimately and exceptionally connected with this Mystery as was St. Joseph, so true to its graces and so faithful to its lessons, should have earned and have received an exceptional degree of glory? It is the reason which we give, and give convincingly, for the high proportion of grace and glory assigned to the Immaculate Mother of the Word Incarnate; and in its measure the same principle is applicable to the Protector of the Child Jesus. We know how the Church exalts the Apostles, the first founders, under Him Who chose and sent them, of the Church which He built upon them, the first ministers of His Gospel and messengers of peace to the whole world; and this is because they held an exceptional office in connexion with the work of the world's Redeemer. But not one of them, not St. Peter, who could answer so fervently to the question: *Dost thou love Me more than these?* not St. John, to whom was given the privilege of being called the Disciple whom Jesus loved, and who, because of that love, was allowed to repose at the last Supper on his Master's breast; not one of the Apostles was privileged like St. Joseph to bear in his arms the Son of the Eternal Father, and to shelter against the attacks of His enemies the Founder of the Christian Faith. He had especial graces; he acquired especial merits; and therefore from the hands of that same Child he must have re-

[4] John i. 46. [5] Luke ii. 48.

ceived, and must be now enjoying, an especial degree of glory in Heaven.

And apply also to our holy Saint the principle so nobly affirmed of our blessed Lord by St. Paul, when arguing in behalf of the exclusive honour and adoration due to the Holy Name of Jesus: *He humbled Himself* &c., *and therefore God hath exalted Him and given Him a Name above all names*:[6] apply what the same Apostle declares is the economy of God in rewarding all His Saints: *as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you also be of the consolation*;[7] and then you have brought home to you with fuller conviction, what must be the exalted position of St. Joseph in the eternal kingdom of his Son. What Pharaoh said and did to the saviour of Egypt, the Patriarch bearing the same name of Joseph, and in many ways prefiguring the destiny and sanctity of him who was chosen as our Lord's Protector, that we may imagine to have been said and done to our Joseph, when rewarded for his fidelity. *Behold, I have appointed thee over the whole land. And he took his ring from his own hand and gave it into his hand: and he put upon him a robe of silk, and put a chain of gold about his neck*.[8] And it is this glory of St. Joseph now in heaven, the result and reward of his special office and his constant fidelity upon earth, that has inspired the Festival of to-day, and has directed our Holy Father in naming him Patron and Protector of the Universal Church.

To-day, then, we are celebrating his Patronage and invoking his Protection for a double purpose: first for the Universal Church, and secondly for our own individual wants. When in the outwardly helpless days of the Infancy of our dear Lord, danger assailed Him, it was to Joseph He and His Mother clung for shelter and defence. To him, the Father and ruler of the quiet home of Nazareth, the Angel used to come, to give forewarning of what was threatening, and to counsel the means of escape. If the Church is the continuation of our Lord's Life, for He has said that He is in His Church for ever, has it not a claim upon the same protection, and in its days of anxiety and oppression at the hands of the world, is it not an inspiring Angel who first immediately to the Holy Father himself, and afterwards through the petition of the faithful from every quarter of the globe, has whispered the words: *Go to Joseph*,[9] make him your Patron and Protector, and seek for comfort and courage through his intercession? With what fervour and unanimity will this invocation be made to-day! and with what earnest confidence will every faithful child of

[6] Phil. ii. 8, 9. [7] 2 Cor. i. 7. [8] Gen. xli. 41, 42.
[9] Ibid. xli. 55.

the Church beg the help of St. Joseph in behalf of the venerable Head of the Church, now in his old age so cruelly and so wickedly assailed by the Herods of these days! It must be that such prayers will be heard, and that the same Protector who saved the Life of the Child Jesus, will come to the rescue of the Vicar of that same Child, and will gain ultimately a favourable answer to the petition we make in the Litanies in behalf of our Sovereign Pontiff Pius, that 'our Lord may preserve him, and may give him life, and make him blessed upon earth, and deliver him not over to the will of his enemies.'

And for ourselves immediately we want that Patronage and Protectorship, and we must invoke it to-day. Much as we may be anxious about the wants and the sorrows of the Church, there is something nearer to us and more specially our own, something which more directly and intimately concerns us; and that is, the welfare of our own souls. It is, indeed, by attending to this one object, that each of us will be ever doing most effectually his duty to the Church, and be expressing most practically his solicitude in her behalf. Neglect of our own spiritual affairs is not the way to give comfort to her whose children we are. Attending to our duties of religion, loving prayer, frequenting the Sacraments, doing works of charity and mercy, avoiding the wicked influence of the world, striving to persevere in good, and praying for this perseverance; this is the most effectual way of making ourselves helpers to the Church in her days of anguish. It is for these graces which we want for ourselves, and by which indirectly we benefit the Church, that we must ask that powerful assistance which we are encouraged to seek by the beautiful Festival of to-day.

In whatever state we may happen to be, let every one of us turn to Joseph for an example and for encouragement. Ye poor! learn from him how to sanctify yourselves in your holy and privileged state: holy and privileged, because our dear Lord chose that state for Himself and His Parents. And if at any time you may be tempted to repine and murmur at your state, and to envy those upon whom fortune seems to smile more kindly than upon yourselves, think of Joseph; think of the poor little Home of Nazareth, and thank God that your homes can be more like to his than the richer dwellings of others. They can be like to his, if you will only make them so by cultivating peace, modesty, industry, cleanliness, and temperance. Poverty never can make your homes wretched, if you thus bring into them the spirit of St. Joseph.

Parents and children! to you St. Joseph is everything that

you can expect as a model; and if you invoke his Patronage, he will be everything you can desire as a Protector. The holy tie which binds together those of the same household, parents with each other, with their children, and children with their parents, existed in its most perfect state in the Home over which he presided. Bring him in to preside over your own homes. Turn him not away, as if there were no room for him, as there was not in the houses of Bethlehem; but let each of you look to him and acknowledge the presence of his spirit, as you are occupied in the relative duties of your state. Parents will look upon each of their children, as St. Joseph looked upon the Divine Child, as a sacred trust given by Heaven, to be saved from the dangers of the world, and to be given back to Heaven. And upon each other they will look as Mary and Joseph did, considering themselves bound by a sacred and an inseparable love, even as Christ is united with His Church.[10] And children, seeing in each parent the office of St. Joseph, will imitate the love and obedience of that Child, Who gave up His own will in all things, and went down with His Parents wherever they led Him, and *was subject to them.*

And if we of the Priesthood,—it is for your instruction, my dear brethren, we are obliged to say it,—if we feel that the office of St. Joseph is committed to us, in the most sacred trust placed under our care, the Blessed Sacrament, the Word made Flesh, still and for ever dwelling amongst us, remember we have the authority of St. Joseph too, and must enforce as far as in us lies that profound veneration and most fervent love which that happy Father must everywhere have rejoiced to spread towards the Divine Child, whom he loved and protected with such constant fidelity. If we always plead the claims of this Adorable Mystery upon your practical devotion, it is because the spirit of St. Joseph is in the Sacred Priesthood, and the Blessed Sacrament is committed to them as truly as was St. Joseph's Charge entrusted to him. Love, then, this Sacrament of Love: approach to It frequently with all the veneration and devotion which St. Joseph demands of you, and from him learn to value the dearest and holiest duty you can have here below; a duty which gives you so close and so real a share in his privilege.

Pray, then, to-day, through the powerful Patronage which is held over you, for all the graces of a holy and faithful life. Pray for an increase in Humility, Obedience, Piety, and Charity. Pray for that most important of all graces, that of Final Perseverance, the grace of a Happy Death, that he and They who

[10] Eph. v. 25.

attended him at the time of his passage into eternity may also attend and bless you at that hour. Ask her with whom he was associated upon earth to join with him now in heaven, in gaining all these blessings for you. And may both of them do what we so often ask of his Virgin-Spouse, may they 'pray for us now and at the hour of our death! Amen.'

SERMON XXXI.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE REGULATION OF THE TONGUE.

Let every man be swift to hear, but slow to speak. James i. 19.

You observe, my dear brethren, that the Epistle of this Sunday is taken from the practical Epistle of St. James: an Epistle full of most important lessons, and written for a most practical purpose. You remember a saying of St. Peter's in his second Epistle, towards the end,[1] that in the Epistles of St. Paul there are certain things hard to understand, which the unlearned and the unstable were wont to force to a wrong interpretation, and thus to wrest to their own spiritual ruin. St. Augustine tells us[2] that these passages alluded to by the Prince of the Apostles, are those which refer to the doctrine of Justification by Faith, which were so distorted to a meaning which that holy Apostle, or rather the Holy Spirit speaking through him, never intended, that some began to teach a doctrine fatal to all morality and to the exercise of Christian virtue, that Faith alone, without good works, was sufficient for salvation. Because St. Paul, for the encouragement of the Gentile converts to Christianity, and for the abasement of that pharisaical self-sufficiency which so often showed itself in opposition to our blessed Lord in the Gospel history, taught that the mere ceremonial works of the Mosaic Law were insufficient without Faith in Christ, certain heretics started up, and taught the dreadfully lax and ruinous doctrine, that Faith alone, without obedience to the Commandments, and without any good works, was all-sufficient for salvation. Prominent amongst these unstable and unlearned teachers was Simon Magus. Against this ruinous doctrine four Apostles directed their efforts, and were inspired to write their respective Epistles: these were Peter, James, John, and Jude. Hence their Catholic Epistles, which were not at all directed against St. Paul, for that earnest-minded Apostle had himself strongly condemned and anathematised such immoral

[1] 2 Pet. ii. 16. [2] Aug. de Fide et Operibus, cap. xiv.

teaching, when he declared again and again that God would judge all men according to their works; but they were directed against those false interpreters of St. Paul and other parts of Sacred Scripture, whose voice found an echo even as late as the Reformation, and whose successors have stereotyped their opinion in that extraordinary profession of disbelief, which goes by the name of the Thirty-nine Articles.[3]

But to-day we have to do with St. James and one of his practical lessons. He wrote, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, in defence of good works; and he cautions us (for he wrote for our instruction) against evil works, amongst which he enumerates the vices of the tongue. Later on in his Epistle, in the third chapter, he speaks more in detail upon this point; but in the first chapter, from which to-day's Epistle is taken, he gives the advice in the words of our text: *Let every man be swift to hear, and slow to speak.* This suggests to us a very important and practical lesson regarding the regulating of the Tongue, which it will be of advantage for us to attend to.

I. Speech is one of those great gifts of God which form the privileges of our nature. By it we are able to keep up our intercourse with each other as social beings; and by it hearts and minds are enabled the more really to communicate with each other, and to interchange feelings and thoughts. By this power we resemble Almighty God, Who has vouchsafed in His outward acts to make known Himself and His will and commands by His Word. He did this in Creation: *He spake, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created.*[4] *By the word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all the power of them by the spirit of His mouth.*[5] Thus does the Psalmist account for the act of creation. And in the opening of the Book of Genesis, where the act is related for us, again and again is it recorded: *And God said;* and after each word the universe developed in beauty and perfection. And in manifesting His will and truths to man, God vouchsafed to speak, either directly by Himself, as to the Prophets, or through the medium of those whom He appointed to repeat to others what they had heard from Himself: as St. Paul explains in the opening of his Epistle to the Hebrews: *God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to our fathers by the Prophets, last of all in these days hath spoken to us by His Son.*

Even the Mystery of the Incarnation is described to us by its great preacher, St. John the Evangelist, as coming from the speech of God. He that became Man is the Word of God:

[3] Art. xi. [4] Ps. cxlviii. [5] Ibid. xxxii.

from all eternity It had dwelt in the Bosom of the Eternal Father, but had not yet been expressed outwardly. But in the fulness of time the Word was manifested outwardly: It *became flesh, and dwelt amongst us.* And thus we call the Son of God made Man, the Word Incarnate. The thought which from all eternity had been locked up in the mind of the Father, proceeding from His Intellect, was made to assume an external form in which man could receive It; and *to those who did receive It, He gave the power to become the sons of God.* Such is the Mystery of the Incarnation, the Mystery of the Word of God.

Constantly do we find that our blessed Lord's miracles are effected by a word, even more than by an act; so that the centurion affirmed the principle upon which these wonders were effected when he said that he did not require the presence, but only the Word of Him Who went about doing good to all: *Say only a word, and my servant shall be healed.*[6] To a leper He says: *I will, be thou made clean; and when He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean.*[7] To a palsied man He says: *Arise . . . . and immediately he arose.*[8] To a blind man He says: *Receive thy sight . . . . and immediately he saw.*[9] In raising Lazarus to life, *He cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth: and presently he that had been dead came forth.*[10] Well, therefore, might people wonder at His words, and at the signs that followed upon them.

To His Church, which was to continue and to spread His work, He gives the power of the word. His commission to the Church is to preach and to teach, that is to say, to make use of speech in communicating the truths committed to her. *Go and teach,* is the solemn charge given to the Apostles on the eve of their mission. *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,*[11] is St. Paul's explanation of the Church's office in instructing and gaining souls. *Preach the word,*[12] is the exhortation he gives to his disciple St. Timothy, when announcing to him the duties of the episcopal dignity with which he had been invested. And therefore, when the Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, He assumed the outward form of tongues of fire, sacramentally expressing the inward gift of wisdom in speech then conferred upon the Church; for of this same Holy Spirit it is written in the book of Wisdom: *The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world; and that which containeth all things hath the knowledge of voice.*[13] Hence the importance

[6] Matt. viii. 8. [7] Mark i. 41, 42. [8] Ibid. ii. 11.
[9] Luke xviii. 41. [10] John xi. 43. [11] Rom. x. 17.
[12] 2 Tim. iv. 2. [13] Wisd. i. 7.

of preaching in the Church, which is making use of the gift thus solemnly bestowed : a means by which those who know the truths of God communicate them by speech to others : as at the present moment I am endeavouring by the use of speech to create in your souls the convictions and feelings which exist in my own.

Nor is it only in preaching that language is used by the Church. It is essential in her sacramental operations. Language expresses the *form* of her Sacraments, that which animates and gives reality to the outward act which constitutes the *matter* of a Sacrament. 'Take away the word,' says St. Augustine, 'and what is water but water? The word is applied to the element, and it becomes a Sacrament : the word itself becoming as it were visible.'[14] What power and efficacy is there, then, in the word of a minister of a Sacrament! He says the word : 'I baptize,' 'I absolve,' and sin yields before its power, and leaves the soul in innocence.

And the law and condition of prayer implies a communication by word between man and God. It is not that our poor words are essential, in order that our great God, Who knoweth all things, even the most hidden, may understand our wants ; but in prayer He wishes the sacrifice of speech to be made to Him, and He accepts and rewards it ; for so says the Psalmist, the great depositor of the prayers of the Church : *May my prayer be directed as incense in Thy sight; the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!*[15] God loves to hear our voice ; and when He has inspired us to speak to Him, our words return to Him like an echo of His own.

And why do I say all this, my dear brethren? It is to show the sacredness even of the gift of speech, and to urge still more upon us by such solemn thoughts the necessity of using that gift with caution, and not to risk the danger of profaning it by undervaluing its importance. *Be slow to speak*, therefore, for you scarcely know the danger that is associated with every word that escapes you. Your words will form a matter for your future judgment, and *every idle word*[16] will then be brought up against you. Let it not be idle, then ; but be slow and wary in whatever you say. Some of God's commandments, you know, directly have your speech for their matter : the second, which forbids you to be idle in your use of the holy Name of God : the eighth, which forbids you to be idle or unwary in your expressed judgments upon your neighbour ; indeed the whole law of charity to God and your neighbour regulates words, as well as thoughts and acts. Therefore, when you are asking God's pardon for your sins, you humble

[14] Tract. in Joan. lxxx. no. 3. [15] Ps. cxl. [16] Matt. xii. 36.

yourself in the confession which you make, whilst you acknowledge that you have grievously sinned in thought, *word*, and deed. Speaking of the tongue, the same Apostle who so well cautions us in being slow to speak, tells us of its power for good or evil: *by it we bless God and the Father; and by it we curse men, who are made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be.*[17]

II. It cannot be difficult for us to know what are the faults against which we must be upon our guard, and regarding which we require to regulate the tongue. We have just observed, that there are two commandments which directly concern the regulation of the tongue: one in the first table, which has reference to duties to God: the other in the second table, having reference to our neighbour. The most notable faults which the unhappy experience of the world brings before us are, first, sins of *falsehood*. These are more directly forbidden by the eighth commandment, as far as they may be directed towards our neighbour, against whom we are forbidden to bear false testimony; but they are really forbidden also by an instinct of our nature, which we outrage every time that that contradiction is created by our own act, between what our mind knows to be truth, and what our tongue utters with the consent of our will to what it feels to be false. For God has infused into every human soul a sense of the distinction between truth and falsehood; and every man knows that it is right to speak the truth, and that it is wrong, and against a law written within us, to utter a falsehood.

Another notable fault of the tongue, proceeding from a neglect of the admonition to be slow to speak, is a violation of the second commandment, which forbids *cursing*, blaspheming, and profane language. The threat which is appended to the prohibition expressed in this commandment, ought of itself to impress all with the necessity of caution in their speech; for so runs the commandment: *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the Name of the Lord his God in vain.*[18] And yet how heedless are many, very many persons in transgressing this law! Parents not unfrequently do not hesitate to correct their children in a spirit of anger, and think that they add severity to their correction, by adding profane swearing to their anger. Surely these things, as St. James says, ought not to be. *Immodest conversation*, of which St. Paul so well says, that it ought never to be tolerated, *as becometh saints*,[19] is another mode of offending against proper slowness in speech, and constitutes much of that frivolous and idle

[17] James iii. 9. [18] Exod. xx. 7. [19] Eph. iv. 3.

talk, of which our dear Lord reminds us we shall have to give an account in our future judgment. With regard to such faults of the tongue, all that is my purpose at present is to suggest in how many ways we may offend, by neglecting the caution of being slow to speak.

But there is one matter into which, in speaking of the regulation of the tongue, it is of practical importance to enter a little more fully; and that is, *conversation about others*. The character, the failings, the imperfections of others, certainly do supply abundant topics for us in our intercourse with each other. If no one ever spoke about the faults of others, or indulged in judgments and criticisms upon their neighbours, the world would be much more silent than it is, and nothing would be lost, but very much gained, by such silence. People could then think upon other subjects, and talk upon what might be unto edification. You remember the instance so beautifully told by St. Luke, in the last chapter of his Gospel, of our Lord appearing in a disguised form to the two disciples travelling to Emmaus. He overtakes them, breaks in upon them, interrupts them in their conversation, and asks them the question: *What are these discourses that you are holding one with another?*[20] Suppose that at any time when we are in conversation, this same question were asked of us, or that it occurred to us to make a sudden act of self-examination, and we were to ask ourself: What am I now talking about? The chance would be, that we should be discussing something or another that concerned our neighbour. Since, then, it is the case, that this is a very fertile subject of conversation, it will be well upon this matter to attend to principles by which we are to regulate our tongue.

Three rules are oftentimes laid down by spiritual and moral writers on this point; and if they are observed, perhaps every fault, certainly a great many faults, will be avoided. The first rule is: 'If you cannot speak well of your neighbour, do not speak of him at all.' If you think ill of him, or if he with whom you may be conversing do so, the probability is that prejudice will affect your judgment, and that you will express yourself under the influence of this prejudice. Or perhaps the other person may not know the evil which you are inclined to tell him, and so you will be spreading what the law of charity would order you to keep secret. The second rule, sometimes called St. Bonaventure's rule, is: 'Do not say in the absence of your neighbour what you would not say in his presence.' For it is unfair, and it is wanting in honest frankness, to wound a person in the dark, when he has no

[20] Luke xxiv. 17.

means of defending or justifying his conduct. And the third rule is: 'Say not of another what you would not have another say of you.' For it is a principle of charity, that we should do to others as we would be done by; and the instinct of nature tells us of the soundness and practical character of this principle. Act in conformity with these rules, and you will find that you may often have to check yourself when you are on the point of speaking. You will be slow to speak, but you will save charity.

There is an Eastern proverb, my dear brethren, which expresses simply but strikingly the necessity of regulating the tongue, and of being very cautious and slow about speaking. 'Before you speak a word, you are its master; after you have spoken it, you become its slave.' Is not this very true? Before you speak a word, you are its master; because of course at that time it is locked up in your breast: you have it completely under your control. You can keep it enclosed in the prison in which it is confined, for ever if you will. You may allow it to die there unspoken, unheard, and incapable of any influence. You are its master. But what a change takes place when you have spoken it! You then become its slave. You have allowed it to escape; it is no longer under your control. It proclaims its independence: it works its way in spite of you. Nay more, it tyrannises over you: it stands up and defies you, and makes you abide by all its consequences, whatever they may be. No unsaying what you are known to have said: no apology, no explanation, can recall the fact that the word has been said. It turns in evidence against you, and may be the means of the most fatal consequences. Be slow, then, to speak; and be not too ready to give up a power and an authority which silence gives you, but which the fact of speaking too quickly may take from you, and may turn against you.

And now, my dear brethren, it only remains for us to bear in mind that the blessing of speech, like every other blessing bestowed upon us by our good God, is intended to help us on towards the end destined for us. There are dangers and evils connected with this power which we must avoid, and against which we must be cautioned and be on our guard; but there are virtues which we can practise, good deeds which we can realise, merits which we can acquire, and a great reward which we can make our own, by using to the glory of God, to the benefit of our neighbour, and to our own perfection, a gift so noble, by which we resemble God, and by which we can be doing here below the work of angels and saints. What good can we not do by the proper use of this gift? We can speak words of charity and kindness; we can console those that are in sorrow; we can counsel those that are in anxiety;

we can instruct the ignorant; we can go into the houses of the poor, and to the bedside of the sick and the suffering, and whisper words of resignation and encouragement. We can do to these what the Angel did to our dearest Lord agonising in Gethsemani, we can speak of the Will of our heavenly Father, and ask them to make their sacrifice generously, *and to do His Will with a great heart and a willing soul.*[21] We can really be anticipating here below the happy work which is to occupy us hereafter in heaven; and in a spirit of love and union we can draw ourselves more closely together in a bond of love, and be helping each other on in our journey to heaven. A gift which is intended for good we can use for good; and instead of having our words one day brought up in judgment against us, we can make them plead our cause, and gain at the hands of Him from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, the reward of singing His praises, and of acting throughout the whole of eternity a part which we shall have prepared and rehearsed here below.

[21] 2 Mach. i. 3.

SERMON XXXII.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE LAW OF PRAYER.

Amen, Amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father any thing in My Name, He will give it to you.

THE words of our dear Lord are always full of love, of comfort, and of encouragement. He Himself stated the principle, that: *From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*;[1] and as His Heart was always full of love and solicitude for His children, therefore it is that His words are what they are. But amongst all His words, it is not possible to find any more expressive of all that He has ever felt and still feels in our regard, than those which the Church so appropriately brings before us upon this Sunday, the Sunday of Rogation time. The occasion upon which they were spoken by Him adds to their importance. It was after His last Supper, in that long and loving farewell discourse, which occupies three chapters in the holy Gospel of St. John.[2] He was at that time preparing His Apostles for a painful separation. He was laying before them an anticipation of future labours, trials, and responsibilities. He told them of their privileges in being so closely associated with Him; but He told them also of their duties and their future sufferings. He assured them of the love which His Father and Himself had ever shown, and would continue to show towards them, and of the consequent hatred and opposition of the world. *If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, therefore the world hateth you.*[3] And the reason why their enemies were to persecute them was, He said, *because they have not known the Father nor Me.*[4]

But how were they to bear up when He was gone? How were they to persevere when thrown upon their own resources?

[1] Matt. xii. 34.
[2] xiv. xv. xvi.
[3] John xv. 19.
[4] Ibid. xvi. 3.

How were they to conquer when they themselves were so weak, and their enemies so strong? Here was the secret. His Name was still to be with them, and upon their invoking it, He would prove that He Himself was close at hand, for He was to be with them for ever. They were to promote His cause, to fight His battles, to advance His glory; and they had only to call upon God for help, and to claim what they asked for through the all-powerful Name of JESUS, and all would be granted unto them; for the promise was given, and faithfully would it be kept: *Amen, Amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father any thing in My Name, He will give it to you.* And thus He enforces the condition and the law of Prayer.

Between this and the Festival of the admirable Ascension, the Church is unusually impressive with regard to this duty of Prayer. In the Gospel of to-day she brings before us our Blessed Lord's words and instruction upon this important lesson and practice of a Christian life. She has instituted the Rogation days, and has ordered the Litany of the Saints to be sung in solemn procession upon those days, in order to mark by this special observance her value of this duty, and to suggest that it is by the preparation of Prayer that we ought to be fitting ourselves for our future passage into Heaven. And there certainly is, by the command of our dear Lord and by virtue of His promise, a connexion established between Prayer and Heaven. It is the connexion of cause and effect, of condition and reward, of labour and payment. Let us see the importance and necessity of this law, and encourage ourselves by considering the success which is sure to attend upon its fulfilment.

I. The very meaning of Prayer at once shows its importance and necessity. It is an act which implies an intercourse with Almighty God. It is an acknowledgment of our dependence upon Him: a declaration that He is the source whence all blessings flow. It is the fitting attitude of a creature before its Creator, of a child before its Father, of a subject before its Sovereign. It is a positive fulfilment of the first commandment: it is equivalent at all times to an act of adoration of God, and is a practical protestation of His absolute supremacy. When God gave forth that commandment in which He ordered us to love and adore Him as the one true and living God, the law of Prayer was comprised in the duties which that commandment imposed upon every one of His children. For you know that when you examine your conscience upon the first commandment, you ask yourselves how you have complied with the daily duty of Prayer; and as a rule, this is the most obvious and practical question you can put to your-

selves, in connexion with this first claim which God has upon your allegiance to Him.

Prayer is a link between ourselves and God. It proceeds from us towards Him, as Grace proceeds from Him towards us. Thus the same two terms are united by Prayer and Grace, only that the sources are inverted: Prayer beginning with us, and ending with God; Grace beginning with God, and ending with us. And as it is God's Grace which moves us to pray, and then He rewards Prayer by further Grace, it follows that the result of Prayer is the continual flowing of streams to and fro between the Creator and the creature that prays. What can be more important than that which thus keeps us united with God? If separation from Him is our greatest misery, Prayer, which prevents this separation, must be a blessing. Just as in Nature there is that force of attraction which keeps the various elements together, and to which each is subject as to a law which binds it, so does Almighty God give to Prayer a power to attract Himself and the creature together, binding Himself by a promise to bend down towards this force, and binding the creature by an obligation to exercise it constantly, in order to keep up the union which ought ever to subsist between itself and its God.

Sometimes we find our blessed Lord recommending Prayer as if it were only a matter of counsel. At such times He is not so much enforcing its obligation, as pointing out to us the great advantages which will result from its practice. So in to-day's Gospel, when He assures us that whatever we ask in His Name shall be granted to us, He advises as well as commands. For we may ask not only for what is essential to us, but for whatever concerns our greater good and perfection. But repeatedly He goes beyond the language of counsel, and issues precepts upon the duty of Prayer. *Ask, and you shall receive*, implies not a counsel merely: it is a command; and it expresses a condition which, when violated, may be fatal to us; for so our Lord says that the reason why we do not receive, is because we have not complied with the command, and our poverty is the consequence of our disobedience. Hence the anxiety of the Apostle St. Paul in his Epistles upon this essential duty, urging unceasing Prayer upon his converts, as the only safeguard against the awful dangers which otherwise would certainly overwhelm them. Hence also the practical advice of St. James upon this duty, which the Church adduces for us in this Rogation season.

What St. John, the beloved disciple, used to say of fraternal charity, we may well say also of Prayer. 'It is the precept of the Lord, and that is sufficient.' Whether we may be able to see

the reasonableness of the duty or not, is of no consequence. We have been told that we must comply with it, and that ought to be enough to secure our compliance. We might imagine that Almighty God could have ordained another system, but He has not done so. Suppose, for instance, that, having allowed us to receive the Sacrament of Baptism, He left us then without any further help to fight as well as we could the battles necessary to preserve the innocence with which that Sacrament invested us; what would the case be then? What an unequal contest should we be engaged in! and how we should long to call upon God, and beg Him not to abandon the creatures of His own Hand! But, how good He is! He has not left us. He is with us, encouraging and willing to take our part in the battle, just on one condition, that we shall ask Him to do so. Thus the Psalmist, in that beautiful ninetieth Psalm, which sings the praises of one *who dwells in the aid of the Most High*,[5] represents the struggle, in which one who is confident of God's help is engaged against his enemy. No snares can entangle him: no arrows can pierce him: no scourge can approach his dwelling. Thousands and ten thousands less protected than himself fall upon each side of him, but no danger approaches him. And why is all this protection vouchsafed to him? It is because he prays. *He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him: I am with him in tribulation: I will deliver him, and I will glorify him.*

It has pleased Almighty God also to establish Prayer as an ordinary means towards gaining Heaven. He fixes His own conditions for that future reward, and Prayer is one of these means and conditions. For some means are necessary for arriving at that end; Sacraments, for instance, are necessary. And St. Alphonsus, the great doctor of Prayer, does not hesitate to say, that for an adult, Prayer is as necessary for salvation as Baptism is for an infant. For as in an infant unbaptised, sin holds its place and excludes the soul from the kingdom of God, so in one who refuses to pray, sin will gain ascendency, and will bring on his ruin. As, then, it is unreasonable for us to expect to attain to any end, unless we make up our mind to adopt the means without which it cannot be attained, it is unreasonable for us to expect Heaven unless we practise Prayer. God wishes us to be saved; but He wishes us to be saved by following the order which He has established. He will not force Heaven upon us against our will, and He interprets our will by the fact of our adopting the means which secure Heaven.

What ought further to impel us to obey this law of Prayer,

[5] Ps. Qui habitat.

which our good God has imposed upon us, is the knowledge that we have of our own weakness. How many times has not experience brought home this truth to us! As we look back upon our life, we find it marked by a series of falls. Duties transgressed: virtues too feebly practised: resolutions made, but not kept: occasions of sin not avoided, and the sin committed: temptations weakly resisted at first, and ultimately yielded to: habits of sin and of tepidity contracted: a vain desire to do better, but a repeated falling back into worse:—this is the view that presents itself, as we examine how the matters of our soul are standing. And why is this? Because Prayer has not been practised. We have taken up the duty of Prayer now and then, but not earnestly, nor fervently, nor perseveringly. But without earnestness, fervour, and perseverance, there is no Prayer. And meanwhile our enemies are so powerful, and so persisting, and so numerous. They attack us at all times, and in all manner of ways. They are above, and below, and around, and within us. It is quite true that we have no real reason to fear them; for there are more upon our side than there are against us. But only on condition that we pray. Otherwise we are left alone, and are quite at their mercy. What we want is the confident spirit of the Psalmist: *I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, whence help will come to me.*[6] *Unless the Lord had been with us, when men rose up against us, perhaps they would have swallowed us down alive. Our help is in the Name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.*[7] Is it not well, then, when we consider all these dangers, and know our own weakness, that God should have established the law and condition of Prayer, and should reward its practice by unfailing victory?

II. Victory, I have said, attends upon Prayer; and here is another reason why, if we are true to ourselves, and consult our best interests, we should faithfully and constantly attend to this duty. What we want is success; and as a fact Prayer does succeed. We should suppose antecedently that Prayer must succeed, because in practising it, we are complying with a condition to which success is attached; for Almighty God, Who does not deceive those who hope in Him, has promised that Prayer shall gain its end. *Ask, and you shall receive.* We are also carrying out God's design in keeping up a connexion with Him; and as we are thus acting in concert with Him, He Who is all-powerful must succeed, and allow us to share in the success. Also in praying we are advocating such a powerful cause, that of souls and eternity. And how can God, Who is interested in the eternal salvation of His own souls, allow such an advocacy to fail?

[6] Ps. cxx. [7] Ibid. cxxiii.

And the motive which we urge is so powerful with God, that it strengthens our anticipation of success; for our motive is the Name and the love of His own Son. And how can this Name be put before the Father without effect? *Amen, Amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father any thing in My Name, He will give it to you.* With such pleading, then, must we not reckon upon success?

What means, 'in My Name'? What does not the mention of this Name awaken in the mind of God; a Name so powerful upon earth, in hell, and in Heaven, before the Throne of God? It brings before the Father His love for His own Son, a love infinite and eternal. It reminds Him of that bond which united them together in one Godhead before the world was made or the universe established. It is an appeal to the great Mystery of the Incarnation; to that act of Humility and Obedience by which He offered Himself to come down upon earth in order to do His Father's Will. It tells the Father how faithfully that Will was done by that Son in whom He had declared Himself to be well pleased. It displays before Him the view of the merits accumulated by the labours, sufferings, tears, wounds, Precious Blood, the Cross and Death of that devoted Son. It appeals to the various events and scenes witnessed in Bethlehem, Nazareth, Egypt, Jerusalem, and Calvary. It pleads the fact of the infinite value of these merits of the one Mediator between God and man. And when, therefore, with that fulness of confidence which the invoking of that most holy Name inspires, we ask the Father to hear and to grant our prayer, the Son Himself who bears His Name appealed to, presents Himself before His Father; and with greater right than the Psalmist, He says: *Respice in faciem Christi Tui:*[8] Look upon the Face of Thy own Christ, Thy own anointed One, who has left His Name with His children to be called upon in the time of Prayer, and who has promised, as He was entitled to promise, that it should never be invoked in vain. With such power attached to this Name, have we not reason to be confident of success, and to feel that if we ask the Father anything, with such a plea, it must be granted to us?

Whenever we pray through this powerful Name of Jesus, we can understand how He in Heaven takes our Prayer and presents it before His Father; and how can it then be otherwise than listened to and granted? If in the days in which He was still in the flesh upon earth, before He had fully consummated His work of obedience, *offering up prayers with a loud cry*, as St. Paul says, *He was heard for His reverence*,[9] what is the success that must now attend His intercession in Heaven! Listen to what St. Paul

[8] Ps. lxxxiii. [9] Heb. v. 7.

says of His office in our regard, now that He is occupying His Throne at the right hand of the Father: *Christ Jesus that died, yea, that is risen again, Who is at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us.*[10] And again: *Jesus is entered into Heaven itself, that He may appear now in the presence of God for us.*[11] And St. John represents Him as now advocating our cause: *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just.*[12] There He is, then, in Heaven praying for us, making intercession, pleading, and propitiating. And a special act of this all-powerful advocacy is exercised in our behalf, each time that we pray through His Name. Truly must we be filled with confidence of success, when we obey the command and comply with the condition of asking everything of the Father through the Name of Jesus. This is what is meant by praying in His Name.

Our Lord Himself prayed and succeeded. He prayed for His Church that it might be perpetual; He prayed that it might for ever preserve its unity, and the Church is living to prove the success of that Prayer. The Apostles prayed, and they succeeded. Look at the instance of St. Paul. Humanly speaking, what little chance had he of succeeding in the unequal contest he had entered upon, against a world which persecuted him even unto death! But he did succeed. And why? Because he prayed. He tells us again and again in his Epistles, that he was earnest and constant in Prayer for himself and the whole Church. Saints have prayed, and have succeeded. The idea we have of a Saint is that he is a man of Prayer. What St. Paul says of the victories achieved by the Saints of the old law because of their faith, is true of the Saints of the Christian Church, who secured their perseverance by their confidence in Prayer. The Church is always praying, and that is why the world cannot subdue her. She prays in her Liturgy, which is unceasingly being sung by her privileged children in every quarter of the globe. She prays in the constant administration of the Sacraments; especially in the Adorable Sacrifice which is being offered up in all nations from the rising to the setting of the sun; and in every spot where the most Blessed Sacrament is reposing. She prays on her Festivals, and in this Rogation time is keeping a special solemnity in honour of Prayer. Therefore the Church continues to exist; and as long as she continues to pray, that is to say for ever, the gates of hell will never prevail against her. And so the Church prays, and succeeds.

But who are they who do not succeed, and who by their want

[10] Rom. viii. 34. [11] Heb. ix. 24. [12] 1 John ii. 1.

of success give such little augury for a happy issue in the struggle for salvation in which they are engaged? It is they who do not pray. Notwithstanding all the encouragements that are held out to them, the cautions that are given, the threats that are uttered, they remain cold, unmoved, unloving, and far from God. And all, just because they do not and will not pray. Now and then a passing feeling of fear comes over them, when their conscience declares to them that they are not what they ought to be in the eyes of God. But instead of allowing this feeling to influence them for good, they let it pass away without nourishing it by Prayer, and they remain in their state of sin. They do not improve, because they do not pray. At another time contrition is excited within them; some motive of sorrow is impressed upon them, perhaps by the mention of our Lord's bitter Passion, or by the sight of a Crucifix: but nothing comes of it, it is short-lived, it has not sunk into the heart, because it was not secured by Prayer. Or a good resolution is suggested; and it is felt to be precisely on the point on which it was most needed; it is made, but there it ends; it is not kept, because it was not guarded by Prayer. No success, because no Prayer.

To those who do not pray there is no success in keeping God's commandments. They are irksome and burdensome, because Prayer does not make them what the Psalmist found them to be, the light of the eyes and the joy of the heart. To such as these, the Sacraments become grievous and galling yokes, which they cannot support, instead of being, what He who instituted them intended them to be, sources of blessing and of joy to the soul. The whole service of God becomes a kind of tyranny, under which they murmur and are impatient, instead of being the noblest privilege which a creature could desire. No wonder, then, that all is rejected: commandments broken, Sacraments abandoned, all duties to God forgotten and omitted; and such a poor prospect for the future presented; and all because Prayer is not practised. No grace, no love, no earnestness, no fidelity, no perseverance, because there is no Prayer. My dear brethren, here is a case in point. Do you feel now that you would wish to do better? Pray that you may do so, and pray from your heart. If not, the feeling is worth nothing; it will pass away, and the sun at its setting will leave you as tepid as it found you at its rising. But if you pray for grace and strength to act up to the feeling, and to keep the resolution which you are drawn to make, God will bless it. Call upon Him in the Name of Jesus to do so, and this day will prove that you have succeeded, because you have prayed.

When our Blessed Lord in to-day's Gospel gives us the law of

Prayer, you observe that He associates with it the possession of joy. *Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.* We all desire happiness; and we are told by One who cannot deceive us, how to obtain it in its perfection. St. Alphonsus tells us that one who practises Prayer bears about him a sign of predestination. Try it, my dear brethren; it cannot fail. It has succeeded with others; and so it will, and must with you. Prayer, from its very nature, is associated with joy; it is a conversing with God, Who is the source of joy. It is the occupation of Heaven, which is the home of joy, and where joy is in all its fulness. How good is God, Who rewards hereafter with eternal joy what is in itself so delightful! The Psalmist understood this; and so shall we understand it, when with Him we shall, through Prayer, have learnt to say: *What have I in Heaven, and besides Thee what can I desire upon earth, the God of my heart, and my portion for ever?*

SERMON XXXIII.

THE ASCENSION.

Ye men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into Heaven?

WELL might the Apostles, upon the day of the admirable Ascension of our Blessed Lord into Heaven, give cause to the admonition of the Angels: *Why do you stand looking up into Heaven?* For it was an admonition, not a rebuke. They were not guilty of any fault, for which they deserved a rebuke; but yet they were doing that for which it was expedient they should receive an admonition. The Church, indeed, to-day shares the astonishment of the Apostles; and well may we all share it. For the Ascension is always called the admirable, or wonderful, or astonishing event of our dear Lord's Life. What more worthy of holy wonder than the scene which was witnessed on that day on the top of Mount Olivet? Thither are the Apostles summoned to witness the closing scene of the history of the Sacred Humanity upon earth. For forty days they had been repeatedly visited and awed, as we may imagine they must have been, by seeing Him in a glorified manner amongst them, eating with them, instructing them, blessing and comforting them, and speaking to them upon the Kingdom of God, that is to say, His Church upon earth. And when all was now accomplished, and it was full time for Him to return to His Father, to take possession of His Glory, and to send down the Holy Spirit for the perfecting of the Church, He calls the eleven together, takes them to the top of Mount Olivet, addresses a few parting words, gives them His last blessing, and then, mounting up slowly and majestically, disappears enveloped in a cloud, and goes to sit at the right hand of His Father.

What else could the Apostles do but stand enraptured at such a sight, gazing in wonder at the spot where He had disappeared, and following Him in their affections, as well as with their eyes, into that Heaven which had then just opened to receive Him? If, at the time of His Transfiguration, the three privileged witnesses of that event were so enraptured at the sight of His Glory, that St. Peter desired to remain where he was, and no more to return

below, might not the happy Apostles, after what they had seen, wish to fix their abode where they then were, and exclaim: *It is well for us to be here?* They were filled with feelings of faith, hope, love, admiration, and joy; and therefore they remained ravished in that state until the Angels came to distract them, and to admonish them that, instead of remaining in their act of surprise, they had a great work to do, and it was necessary they should at once engage themselves about it. And if we, who have followed the Apostles in spirit to the top of the mountain, and share in their admiration, are asked, why it is that on this Festival we are filled with such great joy, our answer is ready. We enter into the glory of this great solemnity because we know what the Mystery of the Ascension was to God and to Christ, and what it is to the Church and to ourselves.

I. We may say that the Ascension of our Lord perfected the end which Almighty God had in view in the creation of man. For God created man in order that he might enter into Heaven, and fill up the places left vacant by the fallen Angels. But by man's own fall, Heaven—which, during the time of his innocence, had been open ready to receive him on the completion of his course upon earth—was closed against him. As Almighty God placed the Cherubim with their flaming swords to prevent Adam's return into the earthly Paradise, so was Heaven also barred against him, until that great act was to be completed by which man should again recover his claim to be admitted to his place in that kingdom of glory. And how was Heaven to be opened? By the Mystery of the Incarnation, it is true. Yet not by the first act, but by the last. Each detail of that great Mystery brought with it some special gift, and contributed its share towards our complete redemption. The first offer of the Son expressing His willingness to come and redeem us, appeased the anger of God. His birth brought joy into the world: His labours were accumulating merits for us: His sufferings and the shedding of His Precious Blood, and His Death upon the Cross paid the full price demanded by the Father: His Resurrection gave us a claim at some future day to enter into Heaven, body and soul; but it was the Ascension which really opened Heaven, and which took our human nature into the kingdom prepared for it. And therefore the Ascension perfected God's end in creating man; for it was not until the day of that admirable event, that God saw in Heaven what He intended at the time of the creation, when He said: *Let Us make man to Our own image and likeness.*[1] How great an event, then, is the Ascension, when we thus view it as God viewed it!

[1] Gen. i. 26.

And to the Sacred Humanity of our Blessed Lord it was the crowning act, which had been so well deserved. The thought of this is quite enough to dissipate any feeling of repining at the withdrawal of His visible Humanity, or to prevent any mitigation of our joy on this solemnity. The Apostles experienced the natural feeling of sorrow when the time approached in which He, Whom they loved so fervently was about to withdraw Himself from them. But our Lord had to censure them for so feeling. There was in them a want of perfect faith and love, and so He said to them: *If you loved Me, you would indeed be glad, because I am going to My Father.*[2] As if He would say: Have I not done enough to earn My return to the Bosom of My Father? I came from Him for your sake: I have done My work, and it is time I should return to Him.

Our Lord intended to be upon earth visibly only for a time; and it is both just and generous that, having accomplished all that He had to do, we should rejoice at His triumphant return to Heaven. The Incarnation implied so much suffering and humiliation—look at Bethlehem, Egypt, and Calvary—and was that state to continue? Look at the contradictions and enemies that were always in His path: was there to be no end to such a state? St. Paul speaking about the Saints, who by many tribulations had earned their reward, says that *the world was not worthy of them*:[3] was it worthy of Him? How had the world treated Him, that it should deserve that He should prolong His sojourn amongst men? Even after His Resurrection, He did remain forty days. Was not that a superabundance of generosity? And why should we not, for His sake, rejoice that He goes to take possession of His well-deserved glory? that He should receive from Angels what man had been so unwilling or so slow to pay Him, a tribute of adoration, of thanksgiving, and of love?

The Ascension implies an act of restitution to the Sacred Humanity. Our Blessed Lord had come down from Heaven in order to assume our human nature. He came to humble Himself, and He returns crowned with glory: He came in suffering, He returns in triumph: He came to find Himself rejected by man, He returns escorted by choirs of Angels. In return, then, for the humility which brought Him from Heaven, is given the exaltation with which He enters it again. For obedience, He has dominion over Angels and Saints: for the poverty of Bethlehem, He is invested with the splendour due to the King of the Universe: for the privations and exile of Egypt, He is seated on a throne at the right hand of the Father: for the hardships of Naza-

[2] John xiv. 28. [3] Heb. xi. 38.

reth, there is given to Him an abundance of joy. To the contradictions and persecutions of men succeed the homage and praise of the Angels. In place of the Crown of Thorns, He bears a bright diadem of glory; and instead of being exalted upon the Cross, He is raised up above the Cherubim and Seraphim and the whole host of Heaven. All this was done on the day of His admirable Ascension; and it is this which the Church is solemnising upon this glorious Festival.

Could you wish, then, to bring Him back from the Glory which He has earned by so many claims? If you love Him, as He deserves to be loved, will you not the rather rejoice in seeing Him so exalted to-day? How often does it occur to you to say of a friend, whose virtues you have known and whose sufferings you have witnessed, that you would not call him back again, after he has passed away into what you hope and feel is his place of rest? Why can you regret that your own Lord has passed to His Home, and has been received with such signs of joy, when the eternal gates uplifted themselves and the King of Glory entered in? If the poor prodigal son must have felt comfort, when he started upon carrying out the resolution he had made: *I will arise and go to my father*, and if he was filled with joy when he found the kind and fatherly welcome he met with upon reaching the home of his childhood, how much more must He have rejoiced Who left His Home, not in waywardness or in a sinful spirit, but in obedience, and for the sake of redeeming sinners, when He now returns, bringing back with Him, not the relics of a life of dissipation, but the marks of sufferings and wounds, which He had nobly endured in behalf of the cause so dear to His Father Who had sent Him! For His sake, therefore, let there be no mitigation of our joy to-day. St. Luke tells us that after witnessing the Ascension, the Apostles went back to Jerusalem with great joy. Such ought to be our feeling, also, in commemorating this glorious Mystery.

II. And what is the Ascension to the Church and to ourselves? By the Church the Ascension has always been held as a great solemnity. It is she who has given to this event the name of Admirable. In it the Church witnesses the inauguration of her own triumphant state; for it was on this day that her first members entered upon their reward in the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. St. Leo says that the Ascension of Christ is our promotion.[4] This must have been one of the motives of the joy which filled the hearts of the Apostles, after they had witnessed their Lord ascending into Heaven; and it is

[4] Christi Ascensio, nostra provectio.

a motive which must influence us also. They felt, as we ought to feel, that Heaven was brought closer to them, more within their reach, and that it seemed more than ever their own, because He had opened the gates, to admit them to enter after Him, when they should have run their course, and fulfilled the work He had marked out for them. He had said to them, as well as to Mary Magdalene : *I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God*;[5] thus declaring that the joy and glory of the Ascension was for His followers as well as for Himself. It is our own human nature that He takes with Him into Heaven, and with Him we feel that we ourselves are crowned.

As we stand, then, now in thought looking up into Heaven, and contemplate the Glory of the only-begotten Son of God, our own God and our own Master, as He enters in, what a sight presents itself, what a noble procession escorts Him ! Hitherto the just had been detained from the possession of their reward, and were in a state of captivity, as none could enter into Heaven, and enjoy the beatific Vision, until the work of redemption had been fully completed. What is the meaning of those words which St. Paul quotes from the Psalmist, *Ascending on high, He led captivity captive* ?[6] The event of to-day, in the joy of which we are so interested, explains their meaning. He enters not alone : He is *the first-born from the dead*;[7] and as St. Paul argues that because Christ rose again, we shall also rise again, inasmuch as He merited for us our resurrection, so He was the first to ascend into Heaven, and there merited our admittance also. Therefore, as He enters in triumphantly to-day, He enters not alone. The Psalmist's order is obeyed, in which he says, in the Name of God : *Uplift your gates, ye princes, and the King of Glory shall enter in*;[8] and the gates being opened, have never since been closed.

What a procession was inaugurated on that Admirable Day ! a procession which has not yet completed its course. There follows in His train each one of the just of the Old Law. Patriarchs, Prophets, Martyrs, and Confessors of the olden dispensation : Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Josue, Samuel, Eliseus, Isaias, Jeremias, Daniel, the patient Job, the faithful Machabees, the holy women, Judith, Esther, Elizabeth the mother of the Baptist, these in the company of the royal Psalmist David, take up his canticle, and pass triumphantly in through the uplifted gates. There is the venerable Joseph, and the resolute martyred Precursor, John the Baptist. The hundred and forty-four thousand

[5] John xx. 17.
[6] Ps. lxvii. and Eph. iv. 8.
[7] Col. i. 18.
[8] Ps. xxiv.

signed of all the tribes of Israel march gladly on, and take their places in the kingdom now no longer closed against them. And as each soul, even after that time, has left the prison of its body, and has been pronounced worthy of joining that procession, or has been purified in Purgatory in order to make it worthy, it falls into its rank, and swells the host which is still accompanying Him, Who has prepared the way for those who have earned a right to follow Him.

In that procession would be seen, when her time of sojourning upon earth was completed, the ever-blessed Mother of the King of Glory, to be promoted at once to the place in which the Psalmist saw her, when he sang: *The Queen stood on thy right hand in gilded clothing, surrounded with every variety*[9] of beauty. As each Apostle consummated his course and achieved his martyrdom, he enters into the procession, and passes through the eternal gates. The white-robed Martyrs, whom the first three centuries had supplied in such numbers: the Hermits, Confessors, and Virgins of later days: each pure and innocent soul on which the unsullied baptismal robe is seen to shine—each joins in, and shares the glory of the Ascension. Even now it is going on. Heaven is still open, and the Church militant and suffering is sending forth a continuous stream of the just made perfect, and bids them enter into her triumphant kingdom. And all this, because the Ascension has now taken place.

If, my dear brethren, there is joy before the Angels of God whenever one sinner, by doing penance, is regaining his right to Heaven, what joy must there not be, when not one but thousands upon thousands follow in the train of Him Who has ascended! And if one Saint's Festival is a cause of joy and glory to the Church, because she commemorates the passing to his reward of one faithful child, what must be her feelings when she considers the numbers whom this day's Mystery has introduced into Heaven! With great reason does the Church upon earth rejoice to-day, and for the same reason we, her members, must participate in this joy.

And to bring more closely home to you an appreciation of the blessings of our Lord's Ascension, may I tell you what you would never have had except for this Mystery? You would have had no Holy Ghost in the Church, and the Church would therefore have been still imperfect. You know that this was our dear Lord's argument, expressed over and over again so affectionately, when He was comforting the Apostles at the time that His separation from them was drawing close to hand. It is expedient for yourselves

[9] Ps. xliv.

that I go, said He to them, because then I will send you the great Comforter, Who will never leave you, will guide you into all truth, will strengthen you in your duties, will come from My Father and Myself to you, and be a link between us even to the end of the world. What was promised has taken place; and because our Lord has ascended and has returned to Heaven, therefore has the Holy Ghost come down, and our holy Mother the Church has been endowed with power and wisdom, and is fully equal to the struggles in which she is ever being engaged.

Another great and rich gift we never should have had except for the Ascension. Must I tell you what it is? We never should have had the Blessed Sacrament. Our dear Lord instituted this great Mystery of Love the night before He suffered, but He had deferred the institution until then, because it was not His will that He should abide sacramentally with us, until He had fully accomplished the work of His Life. He gave at that time the power of consecrating His Body and Blood to the Priesthood, but He wished the power to remain in abeyance, until the perfecting of the Church upon the day of Pentecost, and therefore until after His Ascension. Then, and only then, it was that the Apostles came forth from their upper chamber, and exercised the wonderful power with which they had been invested. Then it was that they began to distribute themselves amongst the various nations, and that the Blessed Sacrament began to take up Its abode in the different homes which were provided for It. In due time It found Its way amongst us also, and He that has ascended is still with us, and will be so all days, even to the end of the world.

Nor, without the Ascension, should we have had the powerful help afforded us in the patronage and intercession of the Saints. We have seen that until He had led captivity captive, and had inaugurated the triumphal procession of the Saints who have ever since been following Him into Heaven, there were none of the just made perfect standing before the Throne of God, and offering up the prayers which St. John in his vision afterwards saw. The Ascension made them sure possessors of their own glory, and gave them that great power which they can in Heaven exercise in our behalf. And Heaven, which until the Ascension had remained closed against the Saints, would still remain closed against us; and after our death, even when we were found to be sufficiently purified from every defilement, to deserve admittance into that happy kingdom, we should have to be detained until He would first enter in, Who by His death had conquered sin, by His resurrection had conquered death, and by His Ascension had in a manner even conquered Heaven. See what we should have lost

only for the admirable Ascension. And is not the Church right in making this a solemnity of the highest order? And had not St. Bonaventure good reason to consider the Ascension to be even the very first and greatest amongst the solemnities of the Church, because that Mystery brought such glory to the Sacred Humanity, and reflected such glory upon ourselves?

III. The Ascension brings Heaven closer to us in another way: not only because through it our own human nature, a part, as it were, of ourselves, is now within its gates, but also because it encourages the exercise of those virtues which lead us on to Heaven. Take first of all the Theological Virtues, and see how their exercise is implied and suggested. Faith is belief in the Unseen: it is, as St. Paul tells us, *the evidence of things that appear not.*[10] To have wished that our Blessed Lord should remain visibly upon earth, would be against the ordinary nature of faith. The Apostles' faith in the Divinity of Christ was far greater after the Ascension than it had been before. Even after the Resurrection, that great proof of the Divinity, there was an absence of the absolute certainty which faith implies; for St. Mark tells us that just immediately before the Ascension, after forty days witnessing the truth of the Resurrection, they had to be rebuked for their littleness of faith: *He appeared to the eleven as they were at table; and He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen Him after He was risen again.*[11] There was too much of what was merely human in their feelings, whilst they saw Him face to face; and so He told them that it was expedient for them that He should leave them, and send upon them the Holy Spirit, Who would enlighten their minds, and strengthen them in their faith. The same Holy Spirit has been given to us to strengthen our faith in that which now we see not, but which we trust at some future day to see crowned with Glory.

Hope, also, seems to follow almost as a natural consequence of the Ascension. Our dear Lord has ascended to His Father and our Father, His God and our God. He has gone to prepare a place for us, and His Ascension is a pledge of our future admittance into Heaven. Heaven is ours now because of the Ascension. Its gates are open, ready to receive us, and why should we not run cheerfully and confidently forward, looking like the noble-hearted St. Paul, *forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth to those that are before, pressing towards the mark, the prize* that awaits us.[12] And Love presses us on as Hope does. Our Lord appeals to it in behalf of His Ascension: *If you loved Me you*

[10] Heb. xi. 1. [11] Mark xvi. 14. [12] Phil. iii. 13.

would be glad because I am going to My Father. Love is self-sacrificing : it seeketh not its own : it is disinterested, and endureth all things. Our treasure is in Heaven, and our heart, the seat of love, is drawn thither also. If Angels, then, ask us : *Why do you stand looking up to Heaven?* we answer : Because Our Lord is there, and we cannot help following Him in our affection and desires.

Prayer, that exercise in which Faith, Hope, and Love can all find an expression, is encouraged and made more confident when we think of the Ascension. With such a thought, it is not difficult to say : *Our Father, Who art in Heaven.* For our Father is there, and the Ascension draws us after Him. Resignation too, that act so loved and recommended by our Lord, practised by Him in the bitterest hours of His Life, how is it not suggested, when in the midst of trials we remember the crown which is already prepared for those, who bear up bravely under what is to be rewarded in us as it was in Him, Who suffered first, and was afterwards exalted ! And Perseverance, the most important of all gifts, that which we can never merit, but for which we must ever pray : of that there is a pledge given in the Ascension ; for as our dear Lord is mounting up on high, He blesses us who look up towards Him, and says in words of encouragement, which must not be inefficacious : Be faithful unto death, and I myself will give you that crown of life, which will be a share in My own Ascension.

Is not the Ascension, then, an admirable Mystery, and is not this solemnity a day of joy and glory ! Others seem to forget it, who know not how to sympathise to-day with our dear Lord and His Church. On the day itself on which that Mystery was accomplished, Jerusalem was busy about its usual occupations, and troubled itself not at all with the event which was being accomplished upon that mountain-top, on which were assembled the favoured few. So is the world busy to-day with its wonted labour, and only a few of us gather together to commemorate this event which is so full of blessings to man. No Angel's voice is wanted to call out to them : *Why stand you looking up to Heaven?* Rather may those blessed spirits cry out in a tone of wondering rebuke : Why do you not look up? *Sursum corda !* Raise up your heart with its affections and aspirations, and exclaim as you see your Lord ascending : O King of Glory, Lord of Hosts, Who didst on this day ascend triumphantly above the Heavens, abandon us not as orphans, but send down upon us the promise of the Father, the Spirit of truth ! Thus sings the Church, and thus sang Venerable Bede, when upon this solemnity he passed away

from earth to Heaven. If of His death upon the Cross our Lord could say: *I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all things after Me,* can He not say it more truly of His Ascension? Let Him draw us after Him to-day. Let Him raise us above the earth, and take us with Himself into Heaven, and give us a glimpse of that future glory, which by virtue of His Ascension will, by His Grace and blessing, be one day revealed in us!

SERMON XXXIV.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

THE TESTAMENT OF THE ASCENSION.

I will not leave you orphans. John xiv. 18.

When we read the last address of our dear Lord to his Apostles, just before He separated Himself from them after the Last Supper, in order to go forth and complete the work of Redemption which had brought Him down from Heaven, we cannot help feeling that he was under the influence of a double love, which was being exercised at that time over His Sacred Heart. There was the influence of His love for His Father, and the influence of His love for His Apostles. He desired to complete His work, in order that He might go to His Father from whom He had come; yet he wished not to leave His Church upon earth for whose sake He had come. He knew, indeed, how to reconcile both these loves as far as Himself was concerned; but He is obliged to argue affectionately and anxiously, in order to reconcile them in the hearts of His sorrowing disciples. He speaks of His love for His Father, His close union with Him, His mission from Him, His compliance at all times with His will, and the necessity of His eventually returning to Him from whom He had come. And He speaks, too, of His love for His Apostles, how He had chosen them in preference to others to be His followers, companions, friends, and the sharers of His labours as well as of His privileges. And such was His love for them, that it was not easy for Him to tear Himself away from them. At the first mention of this separation sorrow had filled their hearts; and so He was determined, that though He was to return to His Father, He would still remain with them, and be amongst them upon earth even to the end of the world.

You know, my dear brethren, that at the time of His Incarnation, though He came down upon earth, He still remained in Heaven in the bosom of the Eternal Father; and so when He was to leave the earth and return to Heaven, He would contrive still to remain upon earth in the bosom of His Church. His union

with His Father was such, that the Incarnation left it perfect as before: His union with His Church had been made such, that the Ascension was not to break it asunder or make it less perfect. The Incarnation did not separate Him from Heaven or from His Father: the Ascension was not to separate Him from earth or from His Church. And He said so again and again. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and I go to the Father. And now I go to Him that sent Me, . . . and because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart. But if you really loved Me you would be glad, because I am going to My Father.* And in order to comfort them, He assures them that He will still remain with them, and for ever. *I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but you see Me, because I live, and you shall live. A little while, and you shall not see Me, and again a little while and you shall see Me.* And elsewhere He makes that well-known solemn declaration: *Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.* And has He not fulfilled His promise? When He came upon earth, He did not cease to be Son to Him who had been His Father from all eternity; and when He left the earth to return to Heaven, He did not cease to be Father to those whom He chose to be His children, and He is continuing to be their Father even to the end of the world. By virtue of the testament which He has made, and which has been so faithfully executed, we are not orphans.

I. What is an orphan? In its natural meaning, it is one who in early years and in a helpless age is left without those ties which are so dear to nature: who is thrown prematurely into a state of self-dependence, to battle with the world without the experience or wisdom of the world: with sorrows, privations, dangers, and solicitudes, under which the safest protection has been taken from him. To him the command, *Honour thy father and thy mother*, is no longer a welcome precept: it is but a suggestion of the remembrance of a duty once dear, but now no longer practicable. The converse of Rachel is the case with him: she lamented her children, he mourns over his parents, *because they are not.* In religion, an orphan is one who has ceased to have God for his Father: who by some act has cut himself off from the God Who made him, and is no longer under the loving care of that Mother Church, through whom he might be an adopted child of Heaven. To such an one Sacraments convey not their treasures of Grace: upon him Saints look not down as upon a fellow-communicant: good Angels see no fraternity in him, because he has ceased to bear about him a beauty which attracted their no-

tice. By wilful sin, by disobedience, by a rejection of the Church's ministerial aid, he has cut himself off from all the associations of religion, and is indeed in the desolate state of an orphan. When the prodigal child went away from his father's home, he was for the time being virtually an orphan. So are they orphans who cut themselves off from the Church, and refuse her tender and maternal protection.

It was against this kind of orphanage that our dear Lord made provision in all that He left us in the Testament of His Ascension. He left us every security for continuing under the care of Himself as our Father; and He infused into His Church a mother's love for each of us. He leaves us not orphans; and it is only a kind of parricidal act of our own, a wilful act of severance from Him and His Church, which can throw us into that state of desolate abandonment. Though our Lord has ascended into Heaven, He has not left us. God is still our Father, not in name only, but in reality. When St. Francis of Assisi was turned out of his home by his father, because of his charity to the poor, so far from feeling himself as an orphan, he exclaimed: 'Now more than ever can I say, Our Father Who art in Heaven.' For, what helps has not our Lord left with us, to assure us that we are not orphans! He has left us the great power of Prayer, to which He has added increased efficacy by authorising us to use His Name, assuring us that such an appeal will never be made in vain. *Hitherto you have not asked any thing in My Name. Ask, and you shall receive.*[1] And remember, it was in that same farewell address in which He promised not to leave them orphans, that this declaration was made. He has left us in the custody of Angels: those blessed spirits who had been so loyal to Him, and who for His sake protect His followers, as did the Angel who rescued St. Peter from his prison. He has left us, what before His Ascension had not yet begun to be exercised—the intercession of the Saints gathered around the Lamb that had been slain.

Most powerful among these intercessors, formed of the just made perfect, He has left His own Mother to us. May He not have thought of this, when He was comforting His Apostles in those farewell words? They at least knew the love that existed between Himself and His Mother, and they had experienced the love she bore those whom He had chosen as His nearest favourites; for they could not have been constantly in His company without becoming familiar with her. The conduct of our dear Lord when dying upon the Cross, shows that He intended His Mother as a part of the Testament He was leaving to His Church.

[1] John xvi. 24.

To the only Apostle then present He gives the legacy of her Maternity; and the fact of her presence with the Apostles assembled for the great event of Pentecost, shows how that legacy was accepted and realised. The Apostles were not orphans, whilst she remained with them upon earth; the Church is not in a state of orphanage, whilst she watches over it from Heaven. Scarcely ever does this Sunday and the Ascension fall out of the month of May; and with the devotion which the Church associates with this month, is associated the conviction that we are not orphans with such a Mother to protect us. A spiritual writer, the Abbot Rupertus, beautifully remarks that when our Blessed Lord gives us the Parable of the Prodigal child, he makes no mention of a mother. Had she been living, he could not so easily have allowed himself to go away from his home, and to break that mother's heart; or if he had done so, and she were still living at his return, it is not the father only and the eldest brother who would have been brought before us, but she must have been there to share the father's joy, when the lost one was found again. We have a Mother, and we ought to make that a motive for a greater love for the Church; and it ought to make it more difficult for us to transgress our duties of obedience. Or if unfortunately we have been carried away, the influence of a mother's love ought to draw us speedily back to the care of one, whom we shall find to be our comfort in sorrow and our refuge in sin.

And the Church herself is a Mother to us; for we call her rightly, 'our holy Mother the Church.' And how rich is she not in her motherly office! Look at her Sacraments, and there you see enough to prove what she can do and ever is doing. Through these channels of Grace she is ever strengthening, comforting, and enriching us, and certainly showing that we are not abandoned as orphans. Let me only mention the Blessed Sacrament, and I have mentioned everything. It is truly an abridgment of all the wonders and blessings of God. It is here, in this Mystery of Love, that our Lord fulfils so very literally and exactly the promise He had made: *Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.* And when He used the consoling words: *I will not leave you orphans*, He added: *I will come to you.* He has come, and He remains with us: He dwells in the midst of us. He makes the Church His Home, and thereby makes it a home to all of us. When St. Paul was telling of the great goodness of the Eternal Father, he says of Him: *He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also with Him given us all things?*[2] How truly is it the case, that in

[2] Rom. viii. 32.

the Blessed Sacrament we have everything, because we have Him who has been given to us, who remains with us, and who, therefore, does not leave us orphans!

That great gift of the Holy Ghost to the Church, to which our dear Lord most directly alluded in His consoling words to His Apostles, is a security for ever against our being orphans, whilst we remain faithful children of the Church. His lights and help are never wanting to her. He secures her against all error: He is the cause of her infallibility. He strengthens her under her trials, and is the pledge of her victory and of her perpetuity. Each of us, when in a state of Grace, is inhabited by this same comforting Spirit, and He who is the bond of union between the Father and the Son, makes us His temples, and is a link also between ourselves and God. With such a help, and encouraged by such a Comforter, what matters it to us if we have trials, and if we have to feel the truth that our life is a constant warfare? If a warfare, it must consist also of a series of victories; for He Who led on the Apostles to the conquest of the world, leads us on also to the conquests which each of us, in our career, is called upon to be achieving against the spiritual enemies that assail us. If the world frown upon us because our sympathies are not with it, but with Him who has conquered the world, why are we to fear it, when we have within us the testimony of the approval of the Holy Spirit, who hath been given to us? If, because perhaps of conversion to the Faith, they of our own household, according to our Lord's prophetical declaration, become our enemies,[3] what matters it, when we change one home for a better? It is they who love father and mother more than God, and who through fear of friends neglect the call to follow God, it is they who really become orphans, because they separate themselves from their true Father, who is God, and keep themselves away from the protecting Maternity of the Church. How often must not the Apostles have thought of that affectionate promise, that Testament of the Ascension: *I will not leave you orphans*, when they were fighting their battles, and were encouraging, by word and example, their children to be brave and generous in making the sacrifices demanded of them upon their conversion to the Faith!

II. We are not orphans, then; but what results from this, in regard to our duties? because privileges imply corresponding duties. If we are not orphans, we are children, and our duties are those of children. We are not independent, and that dependence and reliance upon others, which constitutes at once the happiness and the duty of children, as it constitutes our happiness, so

[3] Matt. x. 36.

does it create duties also upon our part. Children are bound to love, honour, and obey their parents; so are we bound to love, honour, and obey God and His Church. That which nature demands upon the part of children, that they should love their parents, religion demands also. We associate God and His Church together, because they are united and ever will be, and we cannot do our duties towards one, if we fail in them towards the other. It is love which binds them together, because the Holy Spirit, Who ever dwells in the Church, is the Spirit of Love; and it is this same Spirit which ought ever to bind us in our allegiance to Christ and His Spouse. St. Paul tells us how Christ loves His Church, and is espoused to her: and he makes this love the model of the love of parents for each other. *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church.*[4] The love of parents for each other, their love for their children, the love of children towards their parents and amongst themselves,—this is what makes a peaceful and a happy home. Such ought to be our peace and happiness, as children of the Church, loving God, loving the Church, and loving each other.

And we must honour God and the Church. The law: *Honour thy father and thy mother*, is upon us, and we must accept it. To us, as to the Israelites, He says: *The son honoureth his father, and the servant his master; if, then, I be a father, where is My honour? and if I be a master, where is My fear?*[5] These are days in which in an especial manner we are called upon to show to Almighty God in His Church, and in the person of His chief Vicar upon earth, an honour which may serve as a counterbalance and a protest against the indignities and dishonour with which He is treated. If the Church really is our home, as it is, we cannot be cool and indifferent when it is attacked. The spirit which animates those, who, in defending their earthly homes feel that they are defending all that is dearest to them, ought not to be wanting to us; and we ought to feel every wrong inflicted upon the Church, as an injury and an outrage offered to ourselves personally. Otherwise, if we are not keenly susceptible about these interests, it is a sign that we do not appreciate our position. We are looking upon the Church as if it did not belong to us, as if it were not our home; and that is virtually admitting ourselves not to be her children, and therefore to be orphans.

A direct duty of children, also, is Obedience. It is a proof of the existence of love and honour. *If you love Me, keep My commandments*, is not only a Divine declaration, it is the language of nature also. And if, therefore, we admit the Maternity of the

[4] Eph. v. 25. [5] Mal. i. 6.

Church over us, we must be disposed to give up our own will on every occasion that her precepts affect us. Some of these precepts are at once tests whether we are her children or not. In her declarations of faith, if we refuse acquiescence, we are not acting as children; we become orphans, as far as God and His Church are concerned. In her ministrations, if we exempt ourselves, when she insists on our accepting them, as is the case with the obligation of our Easter duties, we cease to be her children: we excommunicate ourselves, are driven out of the home of the Church, and wander about like orphans, unsheltered like sheep which have gone astray. A spirit of submission to the authority of the Church is the spirit of a child of the Church.

Did you not know that I must be about My Father's work? which is the first recorded word of our dear Lord, expresses what is the character of one who is a child, and not an orphan. We have to do, each of us in our own sphere, the work of God and His Church. We have to aim at our own perfection, in order that we may not be unworthy children of such parentage; and we have to encourage, by example always, and by words also when occasion demands it, others to live worthily of their privileged state. Our Lord's work manifested itself in His zeal for souls, which He had come down upon earth to save. He made Himself a brother to us, and loved us with all the affection of a brother. It was this same brotherly love which He infused into His followers. With this was the beloved disciple St. John inflamed, when he made love for the brethren the theme of all his instructions. The same was the case with St. Paul, who declared himself willing to suffer every kind of reproach, if he could only benefit his brethren. Members of the same family must be interested about each other; and each of us, by the obligation of the Christian law, really becomes his brother's keeper, and owes to him the love and solicitude of a brother. This devolves upon us, as one result of our not being orphans, but all children of the same home.

Imitation is another duty and result of our state as children. We are made to the image of God, and we are bound not to disfigure that image by wilful sin; and, further, we are bound to perfect the resemblance more and more which we bear to Him, Who tells us that He has set us an example, which He wishes and commands us to follow. What a noble calling is ours! We are not under a bondage of fear, as if we were slaves, but under a law of love, because we are children. *We have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*[6] We must walk worthy

[6] Rom. viii. 15.

of our vocation, and prove to the world whose children we are by the obedience, the purity, the meekness, the charity which we exhibit in our dealings with God, and our duties to ourselves and our neighbour.

Prayer and dependence, again, are results of our being children, and not orphans. We are not in the state of those desolate sufferers of whom the Prophet sang in his Lamentations : *Children have asked for bread, and there was no one to break it to them.*[7] And when our dear Lord urges the duty of praying with confidence, He bids us address God as our Father, and tells us that as no father, when a child asks for bread, would give him a stone, so our Father from Heaven will give the best gifts to those who ask Him.[8] Those blessings which, upon the Festival of the Ascension, we enumerated as having been secured to us through that admirable Mystery — the Holy Ghost, the Blessed Sacrament, the patronage and intercession of the Saints, and the opening of Heaven unto us, — all these are certainly encouragements to prayer, because they convince us of the goodness and generosity of Him to Whom prayer is directed. Festivals in honour of two of these gifts are now at hand : Pentecost, in which we commemorate the bestowal of the Holy Ghost upon the Church ; and Corpus Christi, in which we solemnise the institution of the great Sacrament of Love. Both of these are intimately associated with the work of Prayer. Regarding the Holy Ghost, St. Paul reminds us, how it is that Blessed Spirit which at all times moves us to pray : *The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings.*[9] And in His quiet and devoted life in the Blessed Sacrament our dear Lord is ever drawing us to Himself, increasing our confidence, and continuing His work of mediation and of sacrifice in our behalf.

We are not orphans, then, my dear brethren, but dear and privileged children of God. We are even now in one home, which is the Church, and are preparing for another, which is Heaven. Thither let us direct our thoughts and aspirations, praying for the true spirit of children, and encouraging ourselves by the recollection of the happiness in store for us, and of the future glory which shall one day be revealed in us. O King of Glory, Lord of Hosts, leave us not orphans, but send upon us the Promise of the Father, the Spirit of Truth ! Alleluia.

[7] Lam. iv. 4. [8] Luke xi. 11. [9] Rom. viii. 26.

SERMON XXXV.

WHITSUNDAY.

The solemn Festival of Pentecost, which the Church is celebrating this day, is always to her an occasion of a very special joy. And, more than that, it is an occasion of glory and triumph. Recording the coming down of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, this Festival is a commemoration of the perfection of the Church, of the fulfilment of prophecies, the infusion of wisdom, strength, and holiness, and gives a pledge and security of future triumphs. For the Holy Ghost is the inward soul and spirit of the Church, infusing and preserving life within her, guiding her in her teaching, animating her in her trials, and leading her constantly forward in the steady and successful career which, notwithstanding many tribulations, is to issue in her eternal triumph. Therefore, upon every recurring Festival of Pentecost, the Church is filled with a triple joy. She looks back upon the past, and remembers the glorious day upon which the great gift was so majestically conferred upon her, in the person of those who were assembled in that upper chamber in Jerusalem. She feels, also, the present indwelling of the same Holy Spirit, true and faithful in His union with her. And she looks cheerfully and confidently forward to the future, knowing that the promise so solemnly enregistered never can fail: that the Holy Spirit is her Spouse, and will remain faithfully united with her for ever.

In order that, upon this glorious solemnity, we may all share in the joy of the Church, and realise the blessings of the Festival, let us turn our thoughts upon this holy Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and study what He is, what He has done, and what He is doing.

I. Let us raise ourselves up to a contemplation of the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and consider the work of the Holy Ghost therein. With the Father and the Son He forms that Mystery. He is the Third Person of the Blessed Three; not the Third in time, as if existing after the other Two, but the Third in order, perfecting the union which for all eternity has subsisted in

that inward Mystery of the Life of God. As the Father was always Father, generating the Son from all eternity; as the Son was always Son to the Eternal Father, born of Him before all ages; so has the Holy Ghost been for all eternity doing in that ineffable Mystery His work of union, and binding Father and Son in an unity of Godhead, and sharing with Them the same Divinity. He is the Love of the Father for the Son, and He is the return of Love from the Son to the Father: proceeding from Both as from one principle, and with Them to be adored and glorified.

And as to each of the other Persons an outward work is assigned—Creation to the Father, and Redemption to the Son—so to Him is assigned the work of perfecting what the Father and the Son have commenced, but have designedly left imperfect until He, the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, seals and perfects the work by His outward operation. Thus in Creation the Father, with the Son and in the Son,[1] as the holy fathers interpret the first verse of Genesis, brings the world into existence. But it is still a confused, misshapen, and imperfect, invisible collection of matter, until the Spirit moves over the waters; and then God says: *Let there be light;* and through the influence of that moving and living Spirit *there was light*,[2] and the beautiful creation becomes at once an object to be seen and admired in all its perfection and harmony.

So, again, in Revelation, God makes known to man truths which He communicates from the secret treasury of His wisdom. But it is through the working of the Holy Spirit that the world is enlightened through the knowledge of these truths; as the Creed tells us of this Third Person: 'Who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified; Who spoke by the Prophets.' And the same is told us by St. Peter, when he reminds us of what we owe to this communication of the Holy Ghost to men: *Holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost.*[3] Therefore it is, as you know, my dear brethren, that when we pray to Almighty God, that He would vouchsafe to send upon us His Light and His Truth, we always invoke the Holy Ghost, that He would instruct and enlighten the hearts of His faithful children.

Grace too—which is that great and important gift, without which we can do nothing, but by the help of which, as St. Paul

[1] 'In principio creavit Deus cœlum et terram.' St. Augustine, lib. i. de Genesi ad literam, says: 'Ipse Dei Filius Principium;' and he quotes our Lord's saying (John viii. 25): *Ego Principium qui et loquor vobis.* And St. Paul, Col. i. 16, says of Christ: *In Him were all things created in heaven and on earth.*

[2] Gen. i. 3.

[3] 2 Pet. i. 21.

fearlessly asserts, we can do all things—is a communication of the Holy Ghost. Taken in its twofold meaning of habitual and actual Grace, it is the work within us of Him, Who upon this day came down upon the Church. Habitual or sanctifying Grace is that indwelling within us of the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul testifies when he says: *Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*[4] It is against the dreadful loss of this blessing that the Psalmist prayed, when he supplicated God: *Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me*;[5] and against the diminishing of Whose influence St. Paul cautions us, when he warns us *not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption.*[6] And actual Grace is that supernatural help, of which the same Apostle declares: *The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity*,[7] and of which he does not hesitate to say: *I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me*;[8] and again: *I have laboured more abundantly; yet not I, but the Grace of God with me.*[9]

And in that other greatest work of God, the Mystery of the Incarnation, the Holy Ghost does the operation by which the Mystery is effected. For when the anxious Virgin hears from the Archangel, that to her was assigned the office of Maternity to the long-expected Redeemer of the world, and asks in wonder how it could possibly come to pass consistently with her Virginity, she receives the answer: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.*[10] And to the good Joseph, when, in a state of painful suspense, he scarcely knew how to reconcile the state of his Virgin-spouse with that blameless innocence with which he knew she was ever invested, the same Angel comes to solve the mystery, announcing to him: *That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.*[11] This is the operation of which the Creed always reminds us when it bids us profess our faith in Him, 'Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.'

Such, then, is the work of the Holy Ghost, to whom the Church this day directs our thoughts. Such is His inward work in the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity; and such His outward work in perfecting Creation; in communicating to man the Divine Revelations; in sanctifying and helping the soul of man by the infusion of Divine Grace; and in the accomplishment of the Mystery of the Incarnation—that Mystery which gives such glory to God, and which has brought peace and salvation to the world.

[4] 1 Cor. iii. 16. [5] Ps. l. [6] Eph. iv. 30.
[7] Rom. viii. 26. [8] Phil. iv. 13. [9] 1 Cor. xv. 10.
[10] Luke i. 35. [11] Matt. i. 20.

II. But the event which the Church is celebrating to-day in a profusion of joy,[12] and which makes the whole world rejoice, is that work of the Holy Spirit which especially concerns the Church. It was to this work that our dear Lord bade His Apostles look forward, when, as the time approached at which He was to withdraw His visible presence from amongst them, He promised them another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who was to remain with them for ever. On this day the promise is accomplished. The Apostles are assembled together in the retired upper chamber, where they have been spending their retreat, with Mary the Blessed Mother of their Lord, since the time of the admirable Ascension. It is the Day of Pentecost: one of the solemn Festivals of the Old Law: the fiftieth day after the Pasch, as it is the fiftieth day after our Easter Sunday: the day on which was commemorated the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai. This was a fitting day for the inauguration of the New Law; and the Holy Ghost comes down to inaugurate it in the shape of tongues of fire. What a change takes place! That which was imperfect before is now completed. The Apostles, who had until then been so timid and hesitating, are filled with light and strength, and they go forth like giants, rejoicing to run the career which is now opened before them.

To-day they receive their faculties to exercise a power, which had been given to them by our Blessed Lord at the time of their ordination, but which had until now remained in abeyance. Those who before had, through fear, as well as through obedience, been shrinking from contact with the people, now go boldly forward into the midst of them, and proclaim in divers tongues the wonderful works of God. To-day the first sermon is preached; the first dogmatic utterance is made by the Church; and it is made through Peter, who thus assumes outwardly the authority and position already assigned to him, as the Vicar of Christ and the visible Head of the Church. He gives an authoritative interpretation to the words of the Prophet Joel, which foretold the wonders of that day, on which God had promised to send forth His Spirit upon the face of the earth. He proclaims the Divinity and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; and he, who not long before had feared to acknowledge His Lord in the presence of poor idle servants and loiterers, declares His Name and His Glory openly before representatives of every nation of the earth.

To-day the first converts are made. Three thousand who had heard the voice of Peter admit its power, do penance, and are baptised. Thus the mark of Catholicity is at once given to the

[12] 'Profusis gaudiis.' Preface of the Mass for Pentecost.

infant Church. For these are three thousand chosen from men of every nation in the world, all united now in the faith of Peter. For this, and this alone, is what is meant by Catholic faith : one and the same faith, submission to one and the same authority, throughout all nations. Here was the difference between the old and new Pentecost. At Sinai, when the Old Law was given, there were assembled together many of one nation, because the Jewish Church was intended to be a National Church ; but at Jerusalem many of all nations receive the law from the new Moses, because the Christian Church was destined to be Catholic, or Universal.

And the work of that Day of Pentecost is still continuing. The Festival does not merely commemorate a fact which is wholly of the past. If the words of our dear Lord are true, as they must be, when He said of the Holy Spirit : *He will abide with you for ever*, then the Day of Pentecost is still continuing its work, and what occurred upon that first day when the Holy Ghost came down, is still going on. Do you want any proof of this fact ? Do you ask for any outward sign or manifestation of the truth that the Holy Spirit is still doing His work in the Church ? You see the proof in the very fact of the existence of the Church, and in her continuing her work so steadily and successfully, in spite of all the strong and obstinate opposition of the world. Ask the reason of her success in propagating her kingdom throughout the world : ask why she claims the gift of infallibility, and exercises it so constantly : ask why in General Councils, or in other utterances of the Church through the Successor of St. Peter, she is able to declare positively what is to be believed and practised, and gains the assent and obedience of so many millions of faithful children ; and the answer is, that the Day of Pentecost has done and is doing its work, and that the Holy Ghost, Who on that day took up His abode in the Church, is keeping His promise, and has not abandoned the Home which He has established for Himself.

The Church is sometimes called, not inappropriately, the Incarnation of the Holy Ghost. For as in that deep Mystery, which records the fact that the Word was made Flesh, we believe that the Second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity took an outward form and came to dwell amongst us, so does the Holy Ghost unite Himself with the Church ; not hypostatically indeed, but yet He dwells in the Church, and in a divine manner works within her. As the Divinity and Humanity united formed one Christ, so the Holy Spirit and the outward body of the Church form the one Church. There are in the Church, as in Christ, two natures, the Divine and the Human. The world can attack that part of

her which is human, not that which is Divine. Just as our dear Lord's enemies attacked and persecuted Him, and made Him suffer, because He was Man; but His Divinity they could not wound. Therefore the Church is, and must be, perpetual; and she is so, because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit ever since the Day of Pentecost.

To the future, also, does the Church ever look confidently forward, because of the fulfilment of this day's Mystery. The Gift bestowed to-day will certainly be held in everlasting remembrance, because it will actually be retained for ever. The Holy Ghost is given for ever, according to our dear Lord's promise, when He said: *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of Truth.*[13] The Church is indefectible: the gates of Hell can never prevail against her. Hence the confidence with which she is always inspired under all her trials. She knows that she must conquer, because God, Who is with her and in her, is more powerful than all her enemies. The Spirit of Wisdom, which guides her in teaching and in defending the truth; the Spirit of Holiness, which animates her in the lessons of virtue which she is always inculcating by word and example; and the Spirit of Strength, which enables her to bear up so successfully under all her trials—this Spirit will abide with her for ever, and continue to lead her on to future victories. Therefore Pentecost is not only a record and commemoration of past triumphs, but it is also a pledge of future conquests. This, therefore, is what the Holy Spirit has done, is doing, and will continue to do for ever in the Church.

III. And in ourselves, in each individual soul, the Holy Ghost has a work to do, and it behoves us to remember and to appreciate that work. How great has been the goodness and love of the Father, that He should give us His Son! How great has been the love of the Father and the Son, to give to us the Holy Ghost! And how great has been the goodness of the Holy Ghost, that He should vouchsafe to come, and to take up His abode within us, and to make us to be His temples! For as creation was perfected when He moved over the waters, and brought light into the world; and as the Church was perfected when He came down upon His mission, and began His work in that upper chamber in Jerusalem, so do we become perfect by His operation. Each of us has a perfection to which we must aspire, and it is through the work of the Holy Spirit that we are to attain to it. The perfection of the soul consists in its union with God: the closer that union,

[13] John xiv. 16.

the greater is the perfection ; and it is the Holy Ghost who is the bond of this union. Therefore St. Paul, when he blessed his children, invoked upon them the *communication of the Holy Ghost.*[14]

We are all under a strict obligation of avoiding sin ; and it is the presence of the Holy Spirit within us which is incompatible with sin in its grievous form. We are called to be saints ; and it is the working of the Holy Spirit in the individual soul that effects its sanctity. The wonderful influence which this presence exercised over the soul of each of the Apostles is that which, if we cherish the presence within us, will be exercised over our soul also. Before the fulfilment of the promise of this day, what timidity, littleness of faith, and shrinking from suffering or sacrifice was evinced by the Apostles ! They were not yet perfect, because the Holy Spirit had not been given to them. During the lifetime of their Lord, even during the time of His Passion, when their sympathy and loyalty, we might have thought, would have called forth their zeal in His defence, they were timid and vacillating. Even after His Resurrection their faith was so imperfect, that immediately before His Ascension, after forty days' intercourse with them in His glorified life, He had to censure them for their incredulity. But from the glorious Day of Pentecost how they changed ! The true apostolic spirit now manifests itself. Wisdom, Fortitude, Holiness shine forth in each of them, and they merit the place which they now hold amongst the first and the greatest Saints of the Church.

In every subsequent age of the Church it has been the same. St. Paul's teaching has been constantly illustrated : *There are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit . . . . to one indeed by the Spirit is given the word of wisdom : and to another, the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit : to another, faith in the same Spirit, &c. ; but all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as He will.*[15] For whatever special gift has been wanted at any time amongst the Saints of the Church, the Holy Spirit has at all times supplied it. He gave Fortitude, and made the Martyrs of the first three centuries. He inspired Wisdom, and formed the Doctors, Fathers, and Councillors of a later age. He infused contempt for the world and a thirst for a close union with God, and established the perfection of the Hermits and religious men and women of other times. When countries have wanted Apostles to convert them, He has fitted them and sent them out. When men of zeal have been required for correcting the abuses and sinfulness of coun-

[14] 2 Cor. xiii. 13. [15] 1 Cor. xii. 4-11.

tries professing to be Christian, He has formed the manly and vigorous Confessors, who have devoted themselves to the work of protecting the sanctity of the Church. Each of these has done, and, thanks be to God, each is even now doing his work in behalf of the cause of God and religion, because of the indwelling of this same Holy Spirit.

And as each one of us, unquestionably, has a work to do in illustrating the Church's holiness in our own life, we must depend, as Saints have ever done, upon the communication of the Holy Ghost, and upon the grace and help which He affords us by the very many means through which He comes down upon us. In answer to prayer, through the Holy Sacraments—especially His own special Sacrament of Confirmation—through the performance of good works, through deeds and words of charity and mercy, through the prayers of others on our behalf, particularly of the Saints and Angels, He strengthens His hold upon us, increases His influence, and moves us forward in the way of our sanctification.

How earnestly ought we not to pray that this Holy Spirit may never be taken from us! How carefully ought we not to guard ourselves against every sin, which can drive Him away! We want His Wisdom to enable us to see all things in the light of Faith, and to weigh all in the scales of eternity. We want His gift of Strength, that we may resist effectually and conquer the enemies that are so numerous, so strong, and so persistent. We want the Holiness which He infuses and sustains, in order that we may continue in the state in which we ought to be found at the time of death, if we expect to be transferred into the kingdom of Glory, into which they alone are admitted who at that time are proved, by being in a state of grace, to be His temples. We want His help, to secure for us the most important gift of final perseverance; for it is that which alone is crowned. And how difficult it is to persevere! It is comparatively easy to begin, and to continue for a time. But to go on steadily: not to fall back, but to go forward, and to keep up our state of innocence and fidelity to the end: that is the work, that is the labour to which we feel ourselves, unaided by His very special assistance, to be quite unequal.

May He, the Holy Spirit of love, the Third Person of the ever-blessed Three, the bond of union between the Father and the Son, Who overshadowed the blessed Mother of God and effected the Mystery of the Incarnation, Who came down upon the Apostles upon this Day of Pentecost, and formed with the Church an union indissoluble and eternal, Who has made Saints and has

led them on to their reward,—may He descend upon all of us, make us to be faithful, and enable us to persevere ; and transfer us hereafter from the kingdom of Grace to the realms of Glory!

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with us all! Amen.

SERMON XXXVI.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE MYSTERY OF THE BLESSED TRINITY ON FAITH AND PRACTICE.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

THIS simple but solemn invocation of the Three Persons of the ever-adorable Trinity, under which we always rejoice to communicate to you the word of God, has a special claim upon us on the Festival which we are this day celebrating, and may well serve the double purpose of an invocation and a text. The words of the invocation are inspired words, written down in the Gospel under the dictation of the Holy Spirit, and used by our dear Lord in that majestic commission given to His Church, just before His Ascension into Heaven. Sending forth His Apostles on their noble but laborious mission, having summoned them to meet Him on the top of Mount Olivet, He addresses them in these parting words, with which St. Matthew concludes his Gospel: *All power is given to Me in Heaven and in earth: going, therefore, teach ye all nations: baptising them* IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST. *Teaching them,* &c.

In loving this invocation, therefore, in frequently using it, in placing it at the front and at the end of our prayers, in hallowing with it every act that we perform, we are conforming ourselves to the spirit of our Blessed Lord, and are using a power which He Himself has placed at our disposal. In entering the Church, and in leaving it: at the commencement of the holy Mass, and at the blessing with which it concludes: in our grace before and after our meals: in the lesson we teach our children, as the Catechism teaches all of us, whenever the clock strikes, marking out another hour of grace given by God, and measuring out another hour of time, bringing us closer upon eternity: early in the morning at our first consciousness upon awaking, and just before we close our eyes in sleep at night,—we sign ourselves with the holy sign

of the Cross, and invoke the holy Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Faithful also to the will and ordinance of the Institutor of the Sacraments, these words are used by the Church in their administration. In Baptism, whilst the water is being poured, the Name of the Blessed Three is invoked in the sacramental form : so also in Confirmation, in Penance as the absolution is pronounced, in Holy Orders, and Matrimony, and Extreme Unction : so again in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass ; and thus the divine operation of the Sacraments is at once secured and affirmed. In prayer the invocation is constantly made : not only at the beginning and the end, but in the different collects of the Church we have the spirit with which she would have us pray, when addressing One Person we supplicate the intervention of the other Two, begging the Father to grant our supplication through His Son our Lord and Saviour, Who with Himself and the Holy Ghost lives and reigns in Unity for ever. And in singing the praises of God in the beautiful Psalms, we recollect at the end of each in Whose service we are engaged, as we stand up and bow down in an adoring spirit, whilst we sing : Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. Certainly, these are not empty words and signs. They are intended to express the faith, hope, and love which we bear to the deep Mystery of the Adorable Trinity : God, One in Three, and Three in One. No wonder, then, that the Church, who teaches us by her Festivals, has instituted a solemnity in honour of this ineffable Mystery. To-day is the Festival, and to-day therefore the Trinity must be our theme. It is not an unpractical subject : far from it. For we shall see how the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity influences the faith and practice of a Christian.

I. That the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity is not merely a theoretical and speculative doctrine, but that it must have a practical influence upon our Faith, will at once be admitted, if it is only borne in mind that every poor and simple person, every child, is taught this truth, and is required to profess it in the first article of his Creed. This certainly would not be the case if it were not an important and a practical article. In the same article, in our professions of faith, in which we declare our belief in the existence of God, we are called upon to admit that this God is One in Substance, Nature, and Godhead, but Three in Persons. The existence of that God Whose necessity we can prove and are forced to admit by reason, is at once followed by the profession of our belief in a Mystery, which reason cannot fathom or demonstrate. . It is not pretended to be the privilege of the

learned, or of those who are specially initiated into the knowledge of secrets which are held back from others, to be allowed to know of this Mystery, and to glory in its profession. Rather, it is the privilege of the simple and childlike mind to accept and to know of this truth. It is one of those truths, and the very first amongst them, of which our dear Lord spoke when He addressed His Father, saying: *I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones.*[1]

This ineffable Mystery at once affirms that which enters essentially into the notion of Faith—that it means believing not what is presented to us by the light of reason, but what is to be known and seen by a supernatural light. Reason prepares the way, but cannot help us farther. It tells us that God must exist, and that in God there is something greater than what can be measured by the mind of man. But it does not tell us what this greatness is. Reason tells us that we ought to be willing to believe whatever this great God reveals to us regarding Himself: that when God vouchsafes to declare anything about His own Nature, we ought to be in the attitude of the infant Samuel, and to say: *Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth*:[2] that we ought to be prepared to believe that in Him there is something mysterious, and that, whatever it may be, we ought to believe it with humble and undoubting faith. Reason therefore tells us that it is unreasonable to deny the Trinity, because it is mysterious and incomprehensible to the mind of man.

When we say that the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity is incomprehensible to the mind of man, we do not say that it is contrary to the principles of that reason which God has given to us, that *light which enlighteneth every man who cometh into this world*.[3] That is incomprehensible which outmeasures the human mind: that which the mind cannot take in, because it is beyond its capacity. If the human mind could adequately take in the notion of God, it would follow that God is not greater than man; and so, if He were not incomprehensible, He would not be God. Then there would be no ground for that noble exclamation of St. Paul's, which the Church brings before us on this Festival: *O the depth of the riches, of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments and how unsearchable His ways!* The merit of Faith consists in bowing down to, and accepting with unhesitating assent, what reason does not comprehend, just because Almighty God asserts and reveals it. And the first tribute which He demands of our Faith

[1] Matt. xi. 25. [2] 1 Kings iii. 10. [3] John i. 9.

is in regard to Himself and the mysteriousness of His Nature. Such is the declaration of the Church in the magnificent profession of her belief in the ineffable Mystery of the Trinity contained in the Preface of the Mass for the Festival: 'What we believe, through Thy own revelation, regarding Thy glory, the same do we believe, without a difference of distinction, regarding Thy Son, the same regarding the Holy Ghost.' Admit, therefore, that in God there is something beyond the reach of the human mind, and you admit the possibility of the Trinity. And admit that God can tell us something about Himself and His own Nature, which we could not otherwise know, and which naturally we cannot comprehend, and you admit the truth of the Trinity; for it has pleased God to reveal this Mystery to us, and to tell us that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are all one and the same God.

The eternity of Heaven for which we are sighing here below, and the Beatific vision which is there to constitute our reward, imply that in God, even to the Saints in Heaven, much more to us here below, there is something incomprehensible. That which is incomprehensible is alone a fitting Object for an eternal contemplation. Were the Object, on which the blessed are ever gazing in ravishing love, fully comprehended by them, we could scarcely conceive that it would satisfy them for all eternity: it would seem that it would pall upon them, and that it would be unworthy of forming an endless occupation to minds exalted to so high a privilege as that of which St. Paul speaks: *We all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory.*[4] It may well take an eternity to contemplate God. Fresh beauties are always developing themselves. Just as here below we sometimes see a beautiful object, which so captivates us that we cannot, as we are wont to say, take our eyes off it, and it seems to increase in beauty as we continue to look upon it, so is it with the Saints in Heaven, always looking upon their God, Whom, although they are rewarded by seeing Him face to face as He is, yet they cannot adequately comprehend.

That this ineffable Mystery influences our Faith follows, again, from the consideration of the three virtues which we have to exercise towards God: the three theological infused virtues of faith, hope, and love. Just as Almighty God presents Himself to us as Three Persons in One God, He wishes us to present ourselves to Him with these three virtues reigning within us. So truly are these three virtues connected together, that we cannot conceive

[4] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

one existing in its perfect state without the other two. They agree in having the same Object to be exercised upon, because one and the same God is that Object. And yet they are distinct virtues, each having its own province and office. Faith, which is the principle of the other two, tells us of the existence of that Object: what It is; what are Its perfections and attributes. Faith tells us that God is the source of all good, and that He is perfect in every attribute. Then hope necessarily proceeds from faith; for we cannot help hoping in One from Whom we know and believe that every grace and blessing flows to us. And seeing His Beauty and His Goodness, we cannot help loving Him, inasmuch as the heart is naturally drawn towards that which it knows to be good and beautiful. So, then, as we look upon God and see in Him, as He vouchsafes to reveal Himself to us, an Unity of Substance and a Trinity of Persons, He looks upon us, and He expects to find the constant manifestation in our own soul of the three virtues which He has Himself infused into us, and which He always wishes to be directed towards Himself.

Thus, as far as principles of Faith are concerned, the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity is not unpractical. It has its lessons, and it suggests our duties.

II. That the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity is calculated to influence the practice of a Christian, follows from the fact of its being a prominent doctrine of an eminently practical religion. How simply and yet how strikingly does that beautiful work, the *Following of Christ*, say: 'What doth it profit thee to dispute deeply about the Trinity, if thou be wanting in humility, and so be displeasing to the Trinity?'[5] All practical religion is contained in the two precepts of charity, which enforce duties to God and to our neighbour. The obligation of both of these is nobly enforced by the thoughts suggested through this deep Mystery.

Let us first of all take the duties which we owe to God. How could we think of bringing ourselves to sin against God, if we could fill our soul with the thought of the Trinity, and with the recollection that we bear about ourselves a resemblance to God, One and Three! How imposing is the idea which the Sacred Scriptures give us of the highest Angels before the Throne of God, in the presence of the Adorable Trinity, veiling their faces with their wings, as if awed by the Mystery which they are contemplating, and bowing down whilst they sing their never-ending song: Holy, holy, holy! They are pure, unspotted spirits, confirmed in grace, and secured in the happy lot of never being able to sin. Yet what is their awe in the presence of their God?

[5] Book I. ch. i.

Contrast sin with this aspect. Man, standing up, confronting his God, criticising His judgments, and breaking through His commandments. Contrast the insulting familiarity of sin with the awe-subdued adoration of the Seraphim! But if man thought of the Trinity—if he would, as he can upon consideration, bring before his mind, in a moment of temptation, the idea of such a God, and the recollection of the adoring Spirits—would he sin? Would not the Blessed Trinity bow him down also in adoration, and drive sin away as an impossible profanity?

Sin, moreover, implies separation. It is a breaking away from God: the creature turning away from and leaving his God: and God leaving and turning away from His sinning creature. Here is the contrast to the Trinity, and the rejection of Its lesson. For this ineffable Mystery implies union: Three so united as to be One. Therefore sin at once disfigures in us the likeness which God has stamped upon us. God leaves the soul, and His image is no longer to be discovered in it. The blessing of the Apostle, in which he implies the influence of this Mystery on a soul in friendship with God, cannot be said to be experienced when sin has driven God out of the soul: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.*[6] For is not this the same as to say, that to be blessed with the grace of God, and to be free from sin, is to have treasured up in the soul the riches of the Trinity? And thus again, faith, hope, and love are enforced by this sacred Mystery.

Upon what a noble motive, also, are inculcated by this high Mystery the duties of charity which we owe to our neighbour. Unity in Trinity suggests that union and fraternal love by which we, being many, ought to be bound together. We are not to attach merely a controversial meaning to those words of our dearest Lord, in which He prays for unity amongst His followers: *Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We also are . . . May they all be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee: may they also be one in Us.*[7] For how is it, my dear brethren, that the Father and the Son are one? It is because they are bound together by the same Spirit of Love proceeding from both; so that the Unity between the Father and the Son implies the Trinity. It is this same Spirit of Love, infused into our souls, which ought to bind us together; and It does so bind us when that takes place which the Psalmist praises when he says: *See how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.*[8] We are also, as St. Paul

[6] 2 Cor. xiii. 13. [7] John xvii. 11, 21. [8] Ps. cxxxii.

reminds us, *many, one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*;[9] and it is our duty, as he elsewhere tells us, to *support one another in charity, careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*.[10] For although we may well interpret these sayings as implying the necessity of unity in Faith between all the members of the Church, they very directly imply the obligation of unity in charity also; for the Holy Spirit is not the Spirit of Truth only, but of Love also.

In how many ways is it not the case that, though we are many, we are one also? We are many, and each of us has our own interests, personal duties, and immediate and intimate obligations and sympathies. But we are not isolated beings. We are members of one large family, *being many, but one body in Christ*. We are all creatures of the same God, made by the same Hands and upon the same Model. We are all redeemed by the same Precious Blood, by virtue of which we have all been rescued from the same misery. We are all journeying on in the same pilgrimage, all expecting the same blessed hope, the coming of the same Rewarder. We are all united into membership of the same Church, have been made brethren by the same Baptism, are supported by the same Sacraments, *all partake of one Bread*,[11] all watched over by the same protecting Saints and Angels, and all hoping to be one day united in the same heavenly kingdom, singing for ever the praises of the same good God. Therefore being many, we are still one: a plurality of persons, but one in faith, hope, and love. How these Christians, then, ought to love one another!

Imagine a violation of charity, and see what sacred associations are rent asunder, and what violence is offered to the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity, according to the model of which we have been made, not merely individually, as each of us is like to God, but socially also, as we are all of one family, and religiously also, as we are called in the hope of the same vocation.[12] In the Blessed Trinity, the Father and the Son, through the Holy Spirit, which is the gift of Each to the Other, mutually communicate and interchange their perfections, as our dear Lord says in His prayer to His Father: *All My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine*.[13] Can we say this one to another? Do we so bear one another's burdens as to give our goods to our neighbours, and receive their sorrows in return? This indeed is the perfection of charity: not expected, perhaps, in the whole multitude of Christians; but it is the charity taught by the Trinity; and when our good God becomes not the teacher only but the model of His children, what else can

[9] Rom. xii. 5. [10] Eph. iv. 2, 3. [11] 1 Cor. x. 17.
[12] Eph. iv. 4. [13] John xvii. 10.

be held before us except what is perfect? So our dear Lord is teaching lessons of fraternal charity, when He bids us show it in such manner, *that you may be children of your Father, who is in Heaven. . . . Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.*[14]

How very different, my dear brethren, would the whole world be, if men would only remember that, being made to the image of the Trinity, they ought to be influenced by that Mystery, and ought ever to be showing unity in a plurality of persons. Not self-interest alone would then be their guiding motive, but love for the brotherhood would everywhere animate them. What would nations then be in their relationship to each other, when the peace which ever reigns among the Blessed Three would be the first object of their ambition? What would families be, when the duties of the parents towards each other, and the relative duties of parents and children, would be inspired by the thought of the harmony ever subsisting between Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? What would neighbours be, when not suspiciousness, nor jealousy, nor a too-quick thinking of evil would prevail, but all around would reign the spirit of unity in the bond of peace? What would friends be, when they would only be drawn together, and hearts be united with hearts, under the influence of a love pure like that which the Father and the Son breathe towards Each Other? As in our profession of Faith in this deep Mystery we declare, that we believe of One Person whatever we believe of Another, so if in our exercise of charity we dealt with one neighbour as with another, and loved each of our neighbours as we love ourselves, would not the world be very different, and God be more pleased when He looked down upon it, and saw that it was very good because it bore some resemblance to Himself, Three in One?

One thing at least we can do towards giving joy and glory to the Blessed Trinity; we can make ourselves less unlike It, by studying and practising these lessons. You are created to the likeness of the Trinity: you have been baptised and made partakers of other Sacraments in the Name of the Trinity. In the Name of the Blessed Three you entered into the Church, and are being sustained within it during the course of your life. In the Name of the same Blessed Three you will be summoned to leave it in its militant state, in order to be aggregated to the Church Triumphant. Affectionately and imploringly will your faith in the Trinity be pleaded in your behalf when your soul will seem to be hovering about the precincts of eternity. 'Go forth, Christian soul, out of this world, in the Name of God the Father Almighty,

[14] Matt. v. 45, 48.

who created thee; in the Name of Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God, who suffered for thee; in the Name of the Holy Ghost, who has been poured out upon thee.' Such will be your summons to pass from one life into another. And when still nearer to eternity, another appeal will be made in your regard: 'Acknowledge him, O Lord, for Thy creature, not made by strange gods, but by Thee the only true and living God. Although he may have sinned, yet he hath not denied, but hath believed, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.'

Solemn thoughts are these, my dear brethren, but exalting and encouraging thoughts. We must allow ourselves to be influenced by them, and the Trinity will then be found to be indeed a most practical doctrine. To imitate the Trinity is our duty during life: to cling to It with faith, hope, and love will be our comfort in death: to contemplate the Blessed Three will be our reward hereafter. And thus we may close our thoughts upon this Mystery, and go away with the conviction, that all that concerns us in the present, and all that awaits us in the future, is connected with a lively and a practical faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

SERMON XXXVII.

CORPUS CHRISTI.

This is the Bread that came down from heaven.

It is not easy to express the feelings with which every Catholic heart is filled upon the noble Festival which we are this day celebrating, in honour of the wonderful and loving Mystery of the Blessed Eucharist. And yet difficult as it is to fulfil, there seems to be a peculiar duty incumbent on the Priesthood, to stand forward in a spirit of loyalty and devotedness, and speak the praises and defend the interests of a Mystery, which is so especially committed to their care: of which they are the dispensers unto the other children of the Church, and connexion with which forms their greatest honour and their dearest privilege. For to the Priesthood the Blessed Sacrament is everything. It is what the Incarnate Word was to St. Joseph. As it was his happy lot to have the honour intrusted to him, that he was made the guardian of his own Lord, so is the very same guardianship intrusted to us, upon whom has devolved so sacred and exalted an office. And as in the Parable of the Marriage-feast, which during the Octave of this Festival will be read for us, the Master sent out His servants to announce that the banquet was ready, and that the guests should come to it; so does the Church appoint us to speak out in her name, and to proclaim the duties which this solemnity suggests. The Festival has arrived, and is being solemnised with all the signs of gladness which we can command. But we want guests. What use can there be in preparing a grand banquet, if none come to partake of it? And what use can there be in all the external splendour with which the Church always invests herself on this solemnity, if no loving and adoring souls come to give reality and life to what without their presence loses its meaning, and disappoints the Church in her eager and loving expectations?

The words of our dear Lord in the Gospel of this Festival, which I have brought before you, remind us that this is a Festival

which especially and immediately concerns the earth. He who came down from heaven upon earth has instituted this adorable Sacrament: this sacred Mystery had its origin upon earth. It has been instituted for those who are upon earth, journeying on their way to heaven. Men, not Angels, are its subjects, its ministers, its worshippers. Not that Angels are excluded from adoring their Lord, as well as ours, in this Sacrament of Love; but they do their work invisibly: it is man that is called upon to worship solemnly and externally. The names which were assigned to our Blessed Lord, because of the work He had to do here upon earth, have a special meaning when applied to His life in this Mystery. Here He is Jesus, Emmanuel, Admirable, the Prince of Peace, the Good Shepherd, the Bread of Life, the Comforter.

But as our dear Lord has come from Heaven in order, amongst other blessings that He was to bring to us, to institute this Mystery in which He was to live amongst us, and make His Church in some way a heaven upon earth, it is to Heaven that we must direct ourselves in order to learn the duties which we owe Him in this adorable Sacrament. What the Saints and Angels do in Heaven to the God who there reigns in the midst of them, is what we must do upon earth to the same God, who here dwells in the midst of us. What St. Theresa, in a vision after her death, is said to have told one of her nuns, is what we may conceive each Saint in Heaven saying to each of us who believes in the real presence of our dear Lord with us in this Sacrament. 'We in heaven and you upon earth have the same duty to perform; to praise God in the presence of God.' What is it that the Saints and Angels in Heaven do towards God, who is ever with them?

I. The Saints and Angels in Heaven see and know God. This is the first great prominent element in their happiness. They enjoy the Beatific Vision. This is the special reward of the faith of the Saints. Each virtue which the Saints practised upon earth has its own reward in that home of the blessed: and the reward of faith is vision. *We see now in a dark manner*, St. Paul tells us, *but then face to face*.[1] The Blessed Sacrament is a great Mystery of faith: we must accept It: we must know It: we must see It, and study It, and familiarise ourselves with It, and thus acknowledge practically and realise Its presence amongst us. How little is the Blessed Sacrament known, and how little is It thought of, by those whose fondest employment and whose proudest duty it ought to be, to make themselves the friends and

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

companions of their dear Lord in this manifestation of His Love! I say nothing of those who do not admit the doctrine of the Catholic Church on the Real Presence (though this so much grieves and astonishes us); but on a Festival of our own, such as to-day's is, it is the want of practical and loving faith towards what they profess to believe, upon the part of so many, that we cannot help lamenting and complaining of.

When St. John the Evangelist tells us, in the beginning of his Gospel, of the rejection of the Incarnate Word upon His coming into the world, he states that it was not strangers but His own people that rejected Him: *He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.*[2] And when another St. John, the Baptist, was censuring some for not having known One who had already been for years in the midst of them, it was not to strangers that he spoke; but it was to the favoured Jews, even to their priests and levites, that he found it necessary to speak in terms of rebuke, saying: *There hath stood in the midst of you One whom you know not.*[3] In language like this, with all the love and zeal of Apostle and Precursor, the Church turns to us, and asks us whether we do not deserve some share in these reproaches, because of our want of knowledge and active faith in regard to the ever-blessed Sacrament, in which our Lord is constantly dwelling in the midst of us.

I am not to prove to you the truth of the Presence of our most good and generous Lord in this holy Mystery. You thank God that you believe it with a fulness of faith that no difficulty and no opposition can ever diminish. Nay, the more others doubt and deny, the more closely are you drawn to believe and to defend this truth. But though I have not to prove, I have to remind. I have to ask you to think over what you accept as a matter of doctrine, as an article of your faith. You believe that in the Blessed Sacrament, here now present before you, and constantly abiding with you in His Home in the Church, your dear Saviour is as really and truly present as He was when lying in the crib of Bethlehem, when reposing on His own good Mother's lap, when going about upon His Mission of love and mercy in Jerusalem, or when agonising and dying on the Cross. He is here the very same as He was then, and as He is now in Heaven, God and Man: He is the Word made Flesh, and dwelling amongst us. Heresy, by an act of what may be called Sacramental Atheism, denies this truth, and thus would pretend to drive our Blessed Lord away from His Sacramental existence, as atheists would drive God out of His own world; but you believe it, you

[2] John i. 11. [3] Ibid. i. 26.

love this doctrine, and fondly cherish it, as amongst the dearest truths of your religion.

But if you really do believe this, why do you not proceed to learn from what is done in Heaven what you ought to do upon earth with regard to such a sacred reality? From your faith, learn to know the Blessed Sacrament, for this is your first duty towards It. Knowing means something more than merely believing. It implies something more personal, practical, familiar, intimate, confidential, and habitual, than believing of itself implies. Thus you may sometimes say of one with whom you are not personally acquainted: 'I have seen him, but I don't know him.' You are aware of his existence, and can recognise him if you see him, but you have not been brought into closer intercourse with him, have not exchanged words and thoughts with him, and therefore it is that you cannot be said to know him. Is it enough for us to be thus disposed towards our dearest Lord in this Sacrament of Love? Just to acknowledge His existence, to believe that He is here, and then do no more? What do the Angels and Saints do in Heaven, whilst revelling in the joys of the Beatific Vision? Is it enough for them to know that God is with them? Or do they not, because they know it, fill themselves more and more with delight in looking upon Him who is the source of their joy, and in their constant and eternal contemplation of Him, ever find new beauty and perfection to keep them in their state of blissful rapture?

And can you really pretend to the privilege of knowing the Blessed Sacrament, and claim the right of being numbered amongst those who are thus associated with our dearest Lord in this great act of His condescension and love, if you do not show your principles more practically? Can you keep up your knowledge and intimacy with a friend whom you will seldom or never visit and converse with: with whom you will always keep a reserve, and to whom you will not communicate your anxieties, your fears, your desires, and your aspirations? If your visits to the Blessed Sacrament are few and far between; if your attendance at daily Mass is but seldom; if your communions are cold and rare; if you have no share in that loyal spirit of the Prophet Daniel, who, when exiled from Jerusalem, used to turn himself in the time of prayer towards the Temple which he loved and prized so warmly—what are you to expect, except a diminution of love in proportion to the distance which you observe towards One who is always eager to welcome you, if you would only respond to His calls? Is this, really, what you call knowing the Blessed Sacrament and practically believing It? Oh for a St. John to come

and address such cold and thoughtless hearts, and to repeat his rebuke: *There hath stood in the midst of you One whom you know not!*

Blame not others, if they believe not in this great Mystery, when you feel how much more deserving of blame you yourself are, who profess to believe, and yet are so unpractical in your faith. For which, think you, is more to blame: one who knows not, or one who does know, and yet shows not the proofs of the privilege which he possesses? In your intercourse with others, you are aware how deeply you feel a slight from a friend, when you think nothing of it if it is shown to you by a stranger. If a person pass you in the street whom you scarcely know at all, you are not surprised nor hurt if he fail to salute you; but if a friend, if one whom you know intimately, thus pass you without a sign of recognition, or refuse to return the sign you may make to him, you feel that you are injured, you are anxious to know the reason, and you demand an explanation. So may your dear Lord complain of your coldness and forgetfulness, and ask: *Quid amplius!* What more could I have done for you, and why do I meet with no return of gratitude and love? Has not our most loving Saviour reason to use frequently this reproach, which the Psalmist utters in His name: *For if My enemy had reviled Me, I would indeed have borne with it: and if he that hated Me had spoken great things against Me, I would perhaps have hidden Myself from him; but thou, a man of one mind with Me, My guide and My familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with Me! In the house of God we walked with consent.*[1] May I not ask, then, my dear brethren, whether if our Blessed Lord reminds us that He is the Bread that came down from Heaven, He has not a right to expect from us some better exercise of the duty of knowledge, which the Saints and Angels are ever engaged in?

II. The Saints and Angels in Heaven also love God. They love Him because they see and know Him, and are ravished by the sight. That sight is the reward of the faith of the Saints, and the love which follows from seeing God is the reward of the love which upon earth they exercised towards Him in whom they believed. And if our faith assures us that in the Blessed Sacrament we have the very same God with us, does it not follow that we must be drawn towards Him by the warmest love? The Blessed Eucharist is the Sacrament of Love. It is the greatest proof which even Almighty God, infinite as He is in wisdom and power, could give us of the greatness of His Love. For, as St. Augustine beautifully says: 'Though He is infinite in wisdom, He

[1] Ps. liv.

knew of nothing greater to give us: though infinite in power, He could not give us anything greater: though infinite in resources, He possessed nothing greater.'[5]

Does not everything in this sacred Mystery assure us of this truth? It was instituted through a motive of love; for love always aspires after union with its object; and as our dear Lord so much loved man and loved His Church, He would remain united with us for ever. It was instituted at a time in which love will always manifest itself: at a farewell meeting, when *having loved His own*, and willing to show that *He loved them to the end*, He gave them this richest legacy of His love. It was instituted by a God of love: by One who makes love the spirit and essence of His law, and will have His creatures united with Him by a bond of love. If it may seem hard to us to love God, when we contemplate Him in Heaven, surrounded by those holy and perfectly pure beings whose sanctity we cannot pretend to emulate, the difficulty is removed by this act of condescension, in which He comes down from Heaven, humbles Himself, invites even sinners to come to Him, and promises to receive them, and to send them away enriched with blessings. Every element that can inspire fear is removed: all that remains is what encourages love and confidence.

Those that could have seen the Infant Saviour in Bethlehem must have loved Him, because of His humility in coming down from Heaven on purpose to be loved: *This is the Bread that came down from Heaven;* and the same humility brings and keeps Him here. Those who saw Him in the retirement of His hidden life, His own Mother and the holy Joseph, those must have loved Him, because of His condescension and His unworldliness: here He is again living a life of retiredness, and making Himself all to all who come to Him. Those who knew Him when *He was seen upon earth and conversed with men*,[6] His Apostles, and Magdalen, and the afflicted ones in Jerusalem, must have been drawn towards Him by His meekness and mercifulness: is He not meek and merciful here? And who, without loving Him, could have seen Him suffering and shedding His Precious Blood, and dying for us, giving that proof of love, than which *no man can have greater than that he should lay down his life for his friends*?[7] and is it not the case, that we have here the same Precious Blood, and a lasting memorial of His Passion?[8] And in this great

[5] Cum sit sapientissimus, plus dare nescivit: cum sit potentissimus, plus dare non potuit: cum sit ditissimus, plus dare non habuit.' *Quoted by the Curé de S. Sulpice: Meditations*, vol. ii. p. 232.

[6] Baruch iii. 38.

[7] John xv. 13.

[8] Recolitur memoria Passionis ejus. Ant. ad Mag.

Sacrament of Love, as we rightly call it, there is this additional proof of love beyond all those others we have cited—that those passed away, but this endures. Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, and Calvary witnessed for a time the signs of love which our dearest Saviour gave in each of them. In the Blessed Sacrament He has been continuing these signs now for eighteen centuries; and not in one place only, as He did then, but in every place of the world, on every altar on which the Holy Sacrifice is offered, and in every Tabernacle in which the Sacred Host is reserved. What acts of love are made in Heaven, as each Angel and Saint at one and the same time looks upon the same God, and is occupied in fervent aspirations! What acts of love ought not to be made upon earth, as all look towards the same Object of faith and love, and ought to be drawn to make returns of love!

III. The Saints and Angels in Heaven teach us another duty which we ought to practise towards the same God in the Blessed Sacrament, as they see face to face. They attend upon God, and they serve Him. The Angels are active, quick, obedient, ministering spirits; and the Saints are aggregated amongst them, distributed among their hierarchy, and sharing their privilege and their work. Daniel and St. John saw the worship that was going on in Heaven, and describe for us the vast numbers that stand around the Throne of the Almighty. Here, then, we learn an express and positive duty which we owe to the Adorable Sacrament. Service is an outward expression and manifestation of respect and love. How are we to show that we fulfil our duty in this respect?

Our first duty is not to abandon the Blessed Sacrament. Although our dear Lord wishes in this Sacred Mystery to live a hidden and retired life, He by no means wishes to be left utterly alone. He wishes His children and followers to come into His Presence, and to prove their fidelity by their attendance upon Him. The servants and ministers of a king consider it an honour to be engaged in the employment which has devolved upon them; and they feel themselves bound on every occasion to pay court to their sovereign, and to be ready at all times to obey his commands. If our faith and our love towards the Blessed Sacrament were more lively and warm, should we really allow our dear Lord to remain unvisited so long? All day and all night here He remains, not asking much of you in return for such patient love, but yet asking something, namely, that you will not altogether forget and abandon Him. Just as He once asked His disciples, when others went away from Him and would walk with Him no

more, *Will you also leave Me?*[9] so does He seem now to remind us of the very few followers and the very many disbelievers He finds upon this cold earth: and He asks us which we intend practically to imitate, those who accept or those who reject what He Himself teaches, and wishes us to believe, regarding Himself in this Mystery of love. Can we answer—and are we willing as practically as St. Peter to answer—*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.*

The Church is always wishing to draw you towards the Blessed Sacrament. That is one great reason why our Blessed Lord has directed her to preserve Him, residing amongst us in this Mystery: that He may be accessible at any moment, may be carried forth to the sick and dying, may be exposed for the adoration of the faithful, and administer His blessing to them in what are called the *services* of the Church. The daily Mass, the Benediction and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Sacramental and Spiritual Communions, these are special opportunities for proving whether we appreciate the honour of serving our Lord living in the midst of us.

Zeal for the beauty of God's House and for the more becoming and more splendid service of the Altar, is another proof we always have in our power to give that we serve the Blessed Sacrament. We owe to our dear Lord some compensation for the poverty and nakedness of Bethlehem, and for the desolate state in which He had to pass His life in the days of His ministry. You remember His affectionate and telling complaint, when to those who were living in the midst of every comfort which His own hands had provided for them, He declared that Providence had made every provision for the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, but that He was left without a place where to lay His head.[10] We should have pitied Him then, and we protest always in our hearts against those hard-hearted inhabitants of Bethlehem who had no room for Him at His birth, and sent Him off then to the shelter of a stable. But if we do nothing actively towards the maintenance of His Altar, if we make no sacrifices for His sake, in what are we better than they were? St. Louis of France and St. Casimir of Poland thought it the highest privilege, in the midst of their royal splendour and duties, to minister with their own hands to what concerned the greater honour of the Blessed Sacrament.

When Almighty God commanded the Israelites through Moses to build Him a sanctuary, He declared that He would therein dwell in the midst of them; and He ordered, amongst other ornaments, that they should place within it images repre-

[9] John vi. 68. [10] Matt. viii. 20.

senting the Cherubim. *They shall make Me a sanctuary*, He said, *and I will dwell in the midst of them. . . Thou shalt also make two cherubs of beaten gold on the two sides of the oracle.*[11] In obedience to the same command of God, Solomon, in his glorious temple, *made in the Holy of Holies two cherubs of image work, and he overlaid them with gold.*[12] What was the meaning of these provisions in the symbolical temples of the old law, except to suggest to those who therein approached to worship God, that they should strive to emulate upon earth the fervour and ready service of the blessed Spirits in Heaven? Did they not also typify our more privileged churches in the Christian dispensation, where our great and holy God dwells really in the midst of us, where Angels are around in their never-ending work of adoration, and are teaching man by their zealous attendance, how he ought to emulate those who are ministering spirits, and who serve our common God with such faithful and prompt obedience? Oh that our eyes could be opened, as were those of the servant of Eliseus, and that we could be led by the example we should then witness of a service so gladly paid, so richly deserved, and so abundantly rewarded!

But why should I say more, or indeed why should I speak at all, when He in whose behalf I argue is Himself present, and yet is silent? It is not argument that is really wanted; it is thought and recollection. Do think, and do remember, what you profess to believe; and all that the Church conjures you to do, all that our dearest Lord begs of you, will at once be granted. In the name of the Church, and in the name of your own good and most loving Saviour, let me exhort you to be true to your principles: to believe, to love, and to serve the ever-blessed Sacrament. By all the authority and zeal which the united Priesthood throughout the world can command towards a cause so dear to us, the source and reward of all our privileges: by the love, the devotedness, and the loyalty of the Church to whom is committed the care and ministration of this Sacred Mystery: by the fervour of all the Saints who have defended their Lord in this Sacrament, and have known by a happy experience how good a thing it is to love and serve Him: by all the Masses and holy Communions which have been offered and received from the day of the institution, and shall be till the end of time: by the ardent love of Mary in her Communions; and by the acts of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving which our dear Lord in His Sacramental life is ever offering to His Father, let me conjure you to think of your duty. Know, love, and serve your dear Lord as worthily and constantly

[11] Exod. xxv. 8, 18. [12] 2 Paral. iii. 10.

as you are able, and do not sadden and disappoint the expectations of His Sacred Heart. He has come down from Heaven in order to lead you thither. He will be wanting to you in nothing; and it will depend only upon your own good will and resolution to find Him to be the food and support of your soul, and your reward both here and hereafter.

ADOREMUS IN ÆTERNUM SANCTISSIMUM SACRAMENTUM.

SERMON XXXVIII.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

Compel them to come.

THE parable of to-day's Gospel, if taken in its literal natural sense, might seem to any of us to be overdrawn, and to record a very improbable fact. We may say this, my dear brethren, without the risk of profanity, and without seeming to question (far be it from us!) the deep wisdom of Him, of Whom the prophet had said: *I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.*[1] But is it what we should expect, that if a man, or, as St. Matthew says, a king, were to invite friends to a splendid banquet, he would get nothing but refusals, and that he should be forced to have recourse to compulsion in order to secure the attendance of his guests? People, as a rule, are very ready to accept such invitations, and they note down the fact of having attended such a banquet among events which are not easily forgotten. Therefore, I say, that taken literally, the facts of the parable seem not very probable. It is most likely that invitations to a grand regal entertainment will be thankfully and respectfully accepted.

It is, indeed, the improbability of such refusals occurring that adds strength to the argument of the parable. Almighty God has oftentimes had to complain that we treat Him in a way that we would not treat each other; that His interests are made to be subordinate to those of the world; and that, as long as we stand well with our fellow-men, it is a matter of little concern to us how we stand with Him. Through one of His prophets He pleads that we should do to Him what we do to those whom upon earth we honour and fear: *The son honoureth the father, and the servant his master: if then I be a father, where is My honour? and if I be a master, where is My fear?*[2] And the Psalmist, speaking of the fidelity of a soul in its dutifulness to God, says: *Behold, as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, as the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes unto*

[1] Ps. lxxvii.; Matt. xiii. 35. [2] Mal. i. 6.

the Lord our God.[3] And so our good and generous God, Who has such claims upon us, before Whom we ought to shrink under the sense of our nothingness before His greatness, asks us at least to do this: to treat Him with the consideration we acknowledge to be due to superiors, to friends, and to neighbours; for that will be far better than what is oftentimes found to be our conduct towards Him. We do refuse Him what we should never think of refusing a neighbour; and therefore what is improbable and seems overdrawn when applied to man, is only too clear and intelligible when applied to God. And so the parable, just because its details are not likely to occur naturally and literally, is the more telling, and presents the argument of our dear Lord in a more forcible light.

I. Let us take the facts of the parable, and ask where there is any analogy to it in God's dealings with us, and ours with Him. My dear brethren, the difficulty is not to find instances of God's invitations and man's refusals, but to know where to stop in enumerating them, or which to choose as most illustrative of the parable. A rich man prepares a great feast; it is a king who prepares it as a marriage-feast for his son. He issues many invitations, and, when all is ready, announces to the guests that he is waiting to receive them. Then it is that those that had been invited send in their various excuses, and on one pretext or another say that something has intervened, and they cannot come. But the master of the feast will not have the seats empty, and sends out for others, poor and suffering persons, who are not likely to demur. Still the number of previous refusals had been so great that there is ample room for more guests. And the servants are sent out again, not merely to invite, but to force in fresh-comers until every place is filled. Is it really probable that, in the case of a grand banquet, there would be so much difficulty in securing the requisite number of guests? In the literal sense it would not be probable. But what has been and what is the case when Almighty God prepares His feasts, and men are the invited ones? Let us see whether now the parable seems so improbable and has no illustrations.

God's preparations of a banquet are manifold. He invites guests: the guests accept the invitation with apparent willingness, and then withdraw their acceptance, and will not come. We are all created for Heaven, and we all have a feeble wish to gain Heaven. You remember that on some occasions when our dear Lord was urging compliance with our duty, by the prospect of our future reward, He speaks of Heaven as a banquet. At one time

[3] Ps. cxxii.

He tells us of the master rewarding his watchful servants, who are ready to admit him at whatever hour of the night he comes in upon them: *Blessed are those servants*, He says, *whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister to them.*[4] At another time He speaks of the reward reserved for His faithful followers, that He and His Father will make them sit down, and will honour them.[5] And the beloved disciple tells us in his Revelations of the joy in Heaven of the saints who have entered into their glory: *Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*[6] Every one is invited to this eternal banquet: He that invites is far greater than any earthly king, and His banquet far more sumptuous. But do all accept the invitation? It is of this banquet our Lord has often said: *Many are called, but few are chosen.* And thus the parable, so improbable of invitations to earthly feasts, has its analogy and illustration here.

There is another illustration of it, to which it would seem that our Blessed Lord immediately alluded at the time that He first spoke the parable. Observe that He spoke it to the Pharisees, to those who were invited to hear His lessons, to witness His miracles, to have brought under their close experience evidences of His Divinity, and yet they rejected Him. The Mystery of the Incarnation implies the marriage of the Divine Son with our human nature, for in that Mystery the two distinct natures are united. The life of our dear Lord was a manifestation of this Mystery, and He was constantly inviting followers to join and sit down with Him. But *He came to His own, and His own received Him not*,[7] and therefore He sent out to invite others. The Jews, the first called, would not come, and the Apostles had their mission assigned to the Gentiles. Preaching and miracles were exercised in their regard, and by them nation after nation has been brought to the faith, and those who had sat in darkness and in the shadow of death saw the great light, to which the Jews were blinded: they were compelled by evidences to accept the faith, and they have taken their seat at the banquet of the Christian Church. Here again has occurred what seems so improbable: that One, for Whom the patriarchs had sighed so eagerly, Whom the earth, labouring under the weight of sin, ought so cheerfully to have welcomed, came, but was rejected by the very ones who had been best prepared, by promises and prophetical announcements, to know and receive Him. They saw Him, they were

[4] Luke xii. 37.
[5] John xii. 26.
[6] Rev. xix. 9.
[7] John i.

spoken to by Him, they were pressed to follow Him; but they begged to be excused: they could not and would not come.

Then, again, the whole kingdom of grace, in which our good God so constantly and so pressingly deals with us, is unfortunately affording a daily illustration of the parable: God calling, and man refusing; God giving His reasons why He wishes to be obeyed, the world holding out counter-attractions, and preferred before Him. Indevout and disloyal Catholics, notwithstanding all their advantages, forfeit their inheritance; and so we have to labour our utmost to gain converts, to come and make atonement for their infidelity. Here, once more, what ought to be so improbable does occur, and the parable meets with its illustration. These are some of the instances in which we find how truly justified was our dear Lord in telling us about the refusals to the great supper.

II. But there is one application of the parable which instinctively forces itself upon us to-day, and which we can well understand our good mother the Church especially designs, by selecting it for our instruction on this Sunday within the Octave of the noble Festival of Corpus Christi. In the adorable Sacrament of the Altar we certainly have prepared for us a banquet to which we are pressingly invited. *O Sacrum Convivium!* O Sacred Banquet! is the Church's address to this Sacred Mystery. It was instituted at the time of the last supper, the last banquet to which our dear Lord invited His Apostles, and which He attended with such feelings of most generous love. It is true, that when our Lord spoke the parable of the supper, He had not yet instituted the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist; but He had promised It. He had announced Its future institution; and we may well conceive that He must have thought of It, when He spoke of the generous invitation and the ungenerous refusals. And as the parable was intended not only for the Pharisees to whom he addressed it, but was designed to be recorded and preserved for the future instruction of His Church, He must have proposed that that Church should use it, as she uses it to-day, as an argument, powerful and striking, in behalf of this greatest proof of His abundant love. And when our most loving Saviour looked forward into the far future, and was contemplating, what He even then knew, the too little value that would be set upon a gift which is beyond all value, was He not right in putting the parable just as He did put it, and, from its very improbability as applied to man, argue the greatness of man's ingratitude in dealing with God?

Is not the Blessed Eucharist a Banquet and a royal Marriage-feast? You know how Its praises were sung in the days of the

Old Testament, when the sacrifices which prefigured It, had been instituted and were being offered up to God. The Psalmist sang about the Bread of Angels coming down from Heaven, which was to be eaten by man.[8] There was to be a Bread which was to strengthen the heart of man.[9] The wise man spoke of a Bread of Heaven prepared with every sweetness and relish.[10] And it was because these sacrifices prefigured the good things to come that they were so much valued by the faithful children of Israel, and that the Temple in which they were offered up was even then called the place chosen by God, in which His eyes and His Heart were to remain for ever.[11] And if they, who only saw in figure, were drawn with such affection towards the shadow, what ought not to be the eagerness with which we should be attracted towards the great Reality now dwelling constantly in the midst of us! The Banquet, then, is prepared: it is even now ready, and waiting to be partaken of. The invitations have gone forth, and do all come? Is it possible that any should make excuses, and send back the answer that they cannot come? O, my dear brethren, there are refusals; and whence do they come?

The first who refuse are those to whom the truth of this sacred Mystery has been clearly revealed, but who disbelieve It, and therefore will not come to It. They profess to believe in the Gospel and in its saving truths; and this truth, which is therein so distinctly contained, they reject, and will not believe. Like the Jews who, as we read in the sixth chapter of St. John, disbelieved our Lord, and when He declared to them the doctrine of the Real Presence—that He was to give Bread, which was to be His own Flesh, for the life of the world—denied the possibility of it to His very Face, and then, when He still farther urged it, got up and went away from Him, and would walk with Him no more,—so do these unbelievers deny the possibility of this doctrine, and reject our dear Lord in this manifestation of His love. How painful is it to us when, in our processions of the Blessed Sacrament, we bear our Blessed Lord into the midst of His people, that once more virtue may go forth from Him, as it used in the days of His visible sojourn in Jerusalem, and heal all amongst whom He moves, to witness the gaze, so expressive of ignorance and unbelief, with which He is greeted by many, who, though the Blessed Sacrament has now been on earth for more than eighteen hundred years, and has been dwelling in the midst of these who ought to know their Lord, are as ignorant of His Presence as if the light of the Gospel had not yet dawned upon them. Truly do such as these require St. John the Baptist to rebuke them for their thoughtless-

[8] Ps. lxxvii. [9] Ibid. ciii. [10] Wisd. xvi. 20. [11] 2 Par. vii. 16.

ness, and to tell them that there stands in the midst of them One Whom they know not.[12]

But there are others who refuse invitations, and very special invitations given to them, accepted by them, but oftentimes too often afterwards declined by them. We need not for these look outside of ourselves, and lament ignorance and blindness upon the part of those who do not know the presence of their dear Lord in this Mystery of Love. There are, unfortunately, undevout and disloyal Catholics who admit, with a fulness of faith that they feel nothing can shake, the truth of the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament, and yet allow themselves to refrain from a practical fulfilment of acknowledged duties, because there are other calls made upon them by the world to which they give the preference. These are ones whom we are ordered to compel to a compliance with what is demanded of them. Sometimes we have to drive them into an obedience to the law of the Church with regard to their annual Easter Communion. Sometimes we have to remind them of the grievous obligation of assisting at Mass on Sundays and the Festivals of the Church. At other times, we have to appeal to their principles of faith, and to ask them whether they can allow their dear Saviour, so good and generous and loving, to remain solitary, unvisited, uncared for by them; the daily Mass never attended; and Holy Communion treated as a penalty, instead of being, as it is, the richest blessing to the soul, an act which good Angels may envy, and in which Saints have found an anticipation of Heaven. When the parable is applied to these, is it so improbable, or does it not rather present an illustration strikingly and painfully true?

And yet, my dear brethren, ought it to be so? Why is it that duties towards the Blessed Sacrament are neglected, and such a little return made for such wonderful love? To whom is the preference given? Excuses of various kinds are alleged in order to justify what a more lively faith and a warmer love never could allow. Even the most fervent are too cold: and what are we to say of those who have no fervour at all? The world has its calls, and all these are listened to: meanwhile, the Blessed Sacrament is abandoned: the Banquet is prepared, the seats are ready, and the invited ones will not come. Surely on such a solemnity as we are celebrating in honour of this adorable Mystery, something will be done to correct such faults, and to prevent such neglect. No longer can your dear, merciful, and loving Saviour be allowed to say: *All the day long have I spread out My Hands to a people that believeth not, and contradicteth Me.*[13] More frequent and more

[12] John i. 26. [13] Is. lxv. 2; Rom. x. 21.

fervent Communions, a more constant attendance at Holy Mass, more daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament, must be amongst the resolutions of this day. And even they who try to be faithful and devout, who feel their hearts warmed and their affections drawn towards this Treasury of Love (and who does not, when he thinks of It?), even the most devout have much to improve, for they fall very short of all that is here deserved and claimed. A privileged soul,[14] to whom it pleased our Blessed Lord to reveal some of the secrets of His Hidden Life and His Passion, tells us that one source of His deep sorrow in His Agony in the Garden was the thought of the too little love shown to Him by the most loving hearts. You can understand this when you remember how you yourselves feel the least sign of coolness from those who are dearest to you. What you would not notice in one whom you know not or care not about, affects you keenly when it comes from a friend whom you warmly love. A shadow of a want of affection from such an one pains you more than a positive affront from another. Apply this to your loving Saviour, and those who try to love Him most in this Mystery of Love, will surely excite themselves to love Him still more and more.

III. And now, my dear brethren, do not think it hard that such thoughts should be put before you on so joyful a solemnity, and that any such words of censure for too little love are out of harmony with the feelings incident to such a time! Remember the parable; remember my text; and remember what is the commission given to a Priest in connexion with this Sacred Mystery. The parable tells us that invitations that are given by God are oftentimes refused. Our text reminds us of the order given to the messengers when sent out to find guests: *Compel them to come.* We are the messengers, and we are told to use the argument of compulsion. *The Charity of Christ presseth us,*[15] and it is in behalf of His Love we plead to-day. Go, says the Church to us upon this day; go, stand up in the midst of the people: read to them the parable of the supper, and tell them it is meant for them, for each one of them. Use arguments with them: convince and persuade them that they must do something more, and compel them to come and do it.

How beautifully, how tenderly, and how effectually is the Church now using this argument of compulsion! She addresses us in the majesty of her Liturgy and the splendour of her Ritual, and in some manner carries us away in spite of our indifference, and moves us to better things. She displays her riches, and with

[14] Bollandists, May 31, Life of B. Battista Varani.
[15] 2 Cor. v. 14.

them surrounds our dear Lord in this wonderful Sacrament, not for the sake of show and pomp, but in order to gain hearts and to increase our devotion and our love. With the master of the feast, she says: My beeves and my fatlings are killed: all things are ready: do not stay away, but come, and come quickly, at once, to my Banquet.

And we, her preachers, unworthy as we are of so noble a task, are now supplied by her by strong and numerous arguments of compulsion which we are commissioned to urge to-day. There is the argument of faith: that powerful weapon, strong enough to make martyrs, as St. Paul reminds us, when speaking of the patriarchs,[16] and surely strong enough to increase activity and devotedness in such a cause. Let me ask you: Do you believe in the Real Presence? Do you believe in the consequences of this doctrine? Do you remember Who it is that your faith tells you resides amongst you in this Mystery, Whom you receive in Holy Communion, at Whose Sacrifice you assist at Holy Mass, and before Whom you are kneeling as you come to visit Him in His Hidden Life upon the Altar? I am telling you of nothing new: I am only asking you to question yourself upon your own principles of faith, and then to act in accordance with the compulsion which will be exercised upon you.

Then there is an argument of compulsion which hope supplies. For those who hope can succeed, and do succeed, where others fail. In what kind of God are you called to place your trust? Not in one who is far from you, but in an Emmanuel, a God with you: in One Who has taken upon Himself all your infirmities, in order that He might give you of His riches, and Who clothes Himself in such an humble outward form, in order not to repel you by fear, but to increase your confidence. Does Heaven, for which we are all hoping, seem so far from us now, when He who forms its happiness is so close? Truly, *there is not any other nation which has gods so near it, as our God is present to all our petitions.*[17]

And is the argument of love, which is always so powerful in compelling, to be without effect in this case? You know that this is rightly called the Sacrament of Love; and that It was instituted as a proof of the love of our dearest Lord for His children: *Having loved His own, He loved them to the end;*[18] and it is in order to continue to love us to the end that He remains with us in this Sacred Mystery. Love always demands a return of love, and it is this return that is most earnestly desired by Him, Who has done so much to establish His claim upon our affections.

[16] Heb. xi. 37. [17] Deut. iv. 7. [18] John xiii. 1.

What more could He do than what He is now constantly doing to show His love for us? Everything that can inspire fear is concealed: that alone which can gain hearts is presented to us. And with your love gratitude must be joined, for a loving soul is always grateful. We are often urged through a feeling of gratitude to do what otherwise we should not attempt. Gratitude has therefore a compelling power, and it exercises this power upon every generous heart. Love and gratitude therefore join with faith and hope in compelling you to the duties which you owe to this most striking manifestation of your Saviour's goodness and love.

Another feeling must we appeal to, and one which inspires and compels noble and generous acts: and this is a feeling of loyalty. If we are not faithful, devoted, and loyal to this Adorable Sacrament, who is to be so? You know how many reject our dear Lord in this Mystery, and will not admit His Presence. It is just for this very reason that more is demanded of us who do believe. We have to make amends for the omissions, and, alas, oftentimes for the want of respect on the part of others! If they only knew what we know, they never would, and they never could, be disrespectful. But they do not know. We do know, and therefore our knowledge ought to move us to compensate for the ignorance of others. One of the motives for zeal in the Church is love to the Blessed Sacrament. They who love try to draw others to join in their privilege. Just as when Philip, having joined our Lord as one of His Apostles, went to call his friend Nathanael to share his good fortune, and said, *Come and see*,[19] so do we feel ourselves moved to try and gain more and more converts to the Church, in order that they may know what is now hidden from them, and by their fervour make atonement for the coldness of others. And thus our allegiance binds us to our cause, and compels us to be devoted ourselves, and to draw others to the same service in which we are enrolled.

These, then, are our arguments of compulsion. Listen to them, my dear brethren, and be influenced by them. Do not allow the glorious Festival which we are celebrating to pass by, and to leave you as cold and ungenerous as you may have been before its arrival. Do not allow the parable to be realised in your regard; but, improbable as you feel it would be if spoken of a worldly banquet, let it be still less probable when you feel that it alludes to an invitation to a Feast, at which Angels minister, and over which your own good and generous God presides. Come with feelings of faith, hope, love, gratitude, and loyalty, and

[19] John i. 46.

you will find It to be what the Church so beautifully says of It in an antiphon which she is now daily repeating for you, and which she wishes you to use as the expression of your own fervour: O SACRED BANQUET![20] in which Christ is received: the memory of His Passion is recorded: the soul is filled with grace: and there is given to us a pledge of our future glory.

[20] O Sacrum Convivium! Ant. ad Mag. in festo Corporis Christi.

SERMON XXXIX.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE SACRED HEART.

This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

It does not require any very ingenious or forced interpretation to bring the beautiful Gospel of this third Sunday after Pentecost, to bear upon the solemn and loving Festival which the Church is celebrating at this time. Friday last, the day after the Octave of Corpus Christi, is the day originally fixed upon for the Festival of the Sacred Heart of our Blessed Lord; but in order to give every advantage to those who might not have been able upon that day to join in the celebration, the Church in many places observes the Festival to-day, and grants everywhere to-day a plenary Indulgence in its honour, for the further encouragement of a Devotion which she values so deeply. The Feast of the Sacred Heart is the feast of the love of Jesus for men, and especially for sinners. It is the record of the Church's appreciation of that love and mercy which the hard and proud Pharisees blamed in this day's Gospel, but which our dear Saviour so beautifully and forcibly defends and justifies by the two illustrations which He gives in the parables of the stray sheep and the lost piece of money. Our Blessed Lord had come to seek and to save those that were lost. What the Pharisees said of Him was quite true: He did receive sinners, and He used to eat with them. He went about amongst them in order to make Himself known and seen. He spoke to them: He performed miracles in their presence: He became their guest: He would draw them into conversation, so that He might now and then influence a single individual, and gain one soul to Himself. You can readily think of the instances of Zachæus, the Samaritan woman at the well, Mary Magdalen in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and Matthew the Publican. The Pharisees declared themselves to be scandalised; they blamed Him upon that account, and expressed themselves in the words of our text: *This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with*

them. He answers by a series of parables, in which He manifests His love for each single soul. He knew the value of each, and had laid down in His preaching the maxim that it can avail a man nothing whatever if he were to gain the whole world and were to lose his own one soul.

It is Himself that He describes as the Good Shepherd, for so He had elsewhere called Himself, who goes in quest of the one stray sheep; or as the poor woman who searches anxiously after the one lost piece of money; or as the father of the Prodigal, who receives and welcomes back with such signs of joy his wayward but now penitent child. It is His own love for souls that He paints for us: a love active, generous, self-sacrificing, forbearing, and individual. Does not this love deserve to be recorded, and to be specially commemorated? Our dear Lord felt that it ought to be; and therefore He intimated, as we are told upon an authority which the approval of the Church commends to us, His own wish that this Festival should be instituted, and that through it the faithful should be drawn to dwell upon the recollection of that Sacred Heart, which loved man so much that It did not hesitate to exhaust and consume itself in testimony of Its love. The Church, always sympathising with every beat of that Sacred Heart, has gladly acted upon the wish thus communicated to her, and now annually celebrates this feast, which follows appropriately after the solemnity in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, with which it is in many respects so closely associated.

The Church, through the means of her Devotions, instructs the minds and draws the hearts of her children. We shall see how she does this through the Devotion to the Sacred Heart; and therefore I will proceed to explain what is the theology of this Devotion, and what are the lessons which it conveys to us.

1. To a faithful and obedient child of the Church it is quite a sufficient reason for the acceptance of any Devotion, that the Church recommends it and approves of it. It is in accordance with a Catholic instinct to embrace with ready and cheerful welcome whatever is thus proposed to us: for we know that she to whom is entrusted the duty of guiding us on in the way of love, and to a closer union with God, will never urge us to practise any devotion which is not solid, and incentive to real piety. But she is not satisfied with this. She wishes us to understand as well as to be moved; and indeed she wishes us to be moved because we understand. She does not will that we should only be passive, but that we should appreciate as fully as possible the motives by which she herself is actuated in recommending and encouraging a favourite devotion. Knowledge and love go together in her teach-

ing; but knowledge comes before love, and she does not ask us to love what we know not.[1] She reminds us that God has made us to know Him and to love Him: to know Him first, and then to love Him because we know Him, and know how truly He deserves our love.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart follows from the doctrine of the Incarnation. But the Church accepts the Mystery of the Incarnation in all its reality, its fulness, and its consequences. She is always giving proofs how she appreciates this holy Mystery. Not a single detail escapes her keen and loving eye. The Birth, the Infancy, the Life, the Labours, the Passion and Death, the Resurrection and Ascension of our dear Lord are brought, each of them in its proper time and order, and with its special lessons, before us. And not this only; but she descends into more minute particulars, and dwells in her Liturgy and Festivals upon the several points which any one of these details suggests. Witness the beautiful Festivals which she celebrates in Lent on the various Fridays, in commemoration of different events or details of the Passion.

This may serve as one answer to the question: Why select one portion of the Sacred Humanity when we adore it all, united as it is hypostatically with the Divine Nature? Why, we might ask in return, select from the Life of our Blessed Lord one event to commemorate on a Festival, when we love and value the whole Life, and wish to except not one of its details? Each event of that Sacred Life, we well know, has its special lesson and spirit; and each portion of the Sacred Humanity might tell us what it contributed towards the work of our Redemption. Thus, the Scourging of the Sacred Body of our Lord suggests the atonement made for our sensuality: the Crowning of His Sacred Head with Thorns reminds us of the price paid for the sins of intellectual pride: the Wounds in the Hands and Feet may preach to us upon the sinfulness of attachment to creatures: the Opening of His Side inspires a desire of a closer union with a God of Love.

We believe that our Blessed Lord was really and truly Man: not in appearance only, as certain heretics once taught, but that He was perfect Man, as the Athanasian Creed declares, subsisting of a rational soul and human flesh. He had a body with all its organs, a soul with all its faculties; and as in us, so in Him, the soul and body mutually influenced each other. We adore the Sacred Humanity because of its union with the Divine Nature, from which, from the first instant of its existence, it never has been separated. We adore His Flesh residing with us in the

[1] 'Rem prorsus ignotam amare omnino nullus potest.' *Aug. de Trin.* lib. . cap. i.

Blessed Sacrament, and in our adoration we include all that is implied in the constitution of a human body. We adore His Precious Blood because it is His, and because it is a part of His living Body. We adore therefore His Sacred Heart through which that Precious Blood circulates, and which was in Him, as in all men, the special seat of the Will.[2]

It certainly is the case that Almighty God, in His dealings with man, sets great store by the offering of the heart; and in showing to man what He has condescended to do for him He has told us what has been the working of His own Heart. *Son, give Me thy heart*,[3] is a request which He vouchsafes to make of each of His children. And when He lays down the law of love, and states the principle of the connexion which He insists upon between His children and Himself, He demands that we should love Him with our whole heart. And of Himself He inspires one of the patriarchs to exclaim in words of admiration: *What is man that Thou shouldst magnify him, or why dost Thou set Thy Heart upon him?*[4] And when He alludes to the intercourse which He wished to encourage between Himself and His people in the holy places which He had chosen for His worship upon earth, He said even to those who lived under a less holy dispensation than our own—for theirs was but a figure of ours—*I have chosen . . this place, . . that My Heart may remain there perpetually*.[5] When, through the prophet Ezechiel, He speaks about converting the people of Israel from the way of wickedness to the path of justice and obedience, He says: *I will give you a new heart, and will put a new spirit within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh*.[6] For they had deserved the censure which our Blessed Lord in the days of His ministry had to repeat, when He said: *Well hath Isaias prophesied of you, saying: This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me*.[7]

And we ourselves, in our dealings with each other, look especially to the heart of those with whom we are connected in friendship or in love. We never can esteem those that are insincere; who say in words what they do not feel and mean in their hearts; or who profess to give outward tokens of affection, and keep back what is of most value, the tribute of a loving heart. We may be willing to plead guilty sometimes to faults by which we may have offended others: we may admit that we have been impetuous, for-

[2] Query. Did not the Monothelite heresy, in denying the existence of the human Will in our Lord, anticipate the feeling of those who deny that any special honour is due to the Sacred Heart, which is the seat of that Will?

[3] Prov. xxiii. 26. [4] Job vii. 17. [5] 2 Par. vii. 16.

[6] Ezech. xxxvi. 26. [7] Matt. xv. 7, 8.

getful, or unguarded in our words : but we never can allow ourselves to say that we have been heartless and insincere. Here we hope to be spared, though on other charges we may submit silently to censure. When our dear Lord came upon earth to teach lessons of love, He came to regulate the affection of the heart ; and He so far succeeded in regard to those who listened to His lessons and followed them, that of His disciples it was said : *The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul.*[8]

When the Church therefore brings before us the Sacred Heart of our Blessed Saviour as an object of devotion, and wishes us to think upon what that Heart did for us, she is alluding really to His immense love, of which It was the seat. In the Liturgy for the Festival which we are now celebrating, two evidences of that loving Heart are especially brought before us : namely, the Passion and the Blessed Sacrament. In each of these manifestations we have the greatest proof of the power of His love. What more could He have done than to have suffered and died for us as He did, except that He should be constantly repeating those sufferings and giving us a lasting memorial of the Death which He endured for us? Turn for a moment your thoughts upon His Passion, and you see all through its bitter course the influence and action of the Sacred Heart. Long before the time of sorrow arrived, He had been anticipating the event, and had desired it in His Heart. From the very beginning of the decree of the Incarnation, a willingness to suffer was implied, when to the Eternal Father the Only-begotten Son declared : *A body Thou hast fitted to Me. . . . Behold I come to do Thy will.*[9] The prophet had said of Him : *He was offered, because it was His own will.*[10] And we have His own assurance of the eagerness with which He was looking forward towards the time when He was to prove to the world how much He loved it ; for He said, speaking of His Passion : *I have a baptism, wherewith I am to be baptised, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!*[11]

And when the time for which He had been longing has at last arrived, it is in His Sacred Heart that His suffering is first evinced. His Agony in the Garden of Gethsemani is its first act. And what does that Agony imply? He has not yet fallen into the power of His enemies, and no human hand has touched Him. The scourging, and the crowning with thorns, and the carrying of His Cross, and the Crucifixion have not yet taken place, but the Precious Blood begins to be shed. He buries

[8] Acts iv. 32.
[9] Heb. x. 5, 7.
[10] Is. liii. 7.
[11] Luke xii. 50.

Himself in solitude, and *He began to be sorrowful and to be sad.*[12] Fear comes over Him, and He sinks down under the weight which oppresses Him. He rehearses in that hour of agony all the details of His Passion, and His Sacred Heart breaks under the pressure which this anticipation makes to bear upon it. Great as were the physical sufferings to which He was subjected in the last hours of His life, when His enemies had their time and He was under their influence, they were nothing in comparison to the grief, the fear, the desolation, and the anguish which reigned within. All this commenced in the Garden: it continued throughout: it was at its greatest degree when He called out in a loud voice upon the Cross a few moments before His Death: *My God, My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?*[13] And why was all this? It was because He became man in order to redeem us from the punishment due to sin. It is the heart of man which gives consent, and takes delight in the commission of sin. *From the heart of man*, He Himself has told us, *come forth evil thoughts* and every kind of sin.[14] And therefore He willed that His own Sacred Heart should be the chief seat of His sufferings, at the time that He was so bitterly making atonement for the sins of men. And the last act of the Passion again concerns His Heart; for just before He is taken down from the Cross, His side is opened with the centurion's spear, and from His wounded Heart pour forth the last drops of blood and water. Can we, then, pretend to value the Passion of our most loving Redeemer, and not value especially the work done throughout its course by the Sacred Heart? Well therefore might our dear Lord, in His vision to St. Margaret Mary, point to His wounded Heart, and say: 'Behold My Heart, which is so inflamed with love for men!'

The Blessed Sacrament and the Passion are intimately connected, and it is the same Sacred Heart which does its work in both of these mysteries and proofs of Divine love. It was the love of the Sacred Heart which suggested the institution of the adorable Eucharist. It was just before the commencement of the Agony in the Garden, that, having loved His own and loved them to the end, at the last supper He fulfilled the promise He had made soon after the calling of the Apostles, and inaugurated His Sacramental life. By virtue of the power which He then gave to His Apostles of doing what He did, we have for ever residing amongst us the same Jesus, Who was born of the Virgin Mary, Who laboured, suffered, and died for us. We have His true Body living again in the midst of us, and within that Body is still beating the Sacred Heart, as it was beating on that holy night when

[12] Matt. xxvi. 37. [13] Ibid. xxvii. 46. [14] Ibid. xv. 19.

the Disciple whom Jesus loved heard and felt it, as he reposed upon His breast. What St. John felt in those privileged moments is what our faith and love ought to make us feel when we remember the reality of His Presence amongst us. Devotion to the Sacred Heart must have burned in the heart of that happy and loving Evangelist, and if we love the Blessed Sacrament and believe in this holy Mystery, the same devotion ought also to burn in our hearts. In every circumstance in which we view the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacred Heart is doing Its work. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, It sheds again the Precious Blood which circulates through It. In Holy Communion It draws us to Itself, and presses Heart against heart, whilst It keeps up Its abode within us. In Its constant Presence in Its quiet home in the Tabernacle, It is always beating with love, and is fulfilling what had been prophetically said of It: I have chosen this place that My Heart may be here for ever.

If, then, you value the Passion of our dear Lord, and if you love the Blessed Sacrament, you admit the principle of Devotion to the Sacred Heart; and thus it is that the Church instructs us through this devotion.

II. And what are the lessons which we ought to learn for ourselves and for our own practice through the means of this loving Devotion? Love is its first lesson. This is the direct and immediate return that is demanded of us. The Sacred Heart tells us of the love of Jesus for us, and it is on this account that it appeals for the offering of the love of our own heart. For love always demands a return, and if it gain not that return it is unsatisfied, and is a source of pain to us rather than of joy and comfort. You know this in your intercourse with others. It matters little to you if you are not loved by those for whom you have no esteem; but if a friend, if one on whom you have bestowed the affection of your heart, treats you coldly and returns not that affection, you become sad and ill at ease. Your heart is wounded, and it feels the pain of the wound. So is the Sacred Heart of our dear Lord always represented as being wounded, not only because the spear pierced It, but because the coldness of man and our want of love has pierced It also. St. John, who was able to learn what was the love of our dear Saviour at its very source, argues with us, and says: *Let us therefore love God, because God first hath loved us.*[15] The Sacred Heart may certainly use this argument, and surely we cannot allow the appeal to be unanswered. Our Blessed Lord has told us what is to be the measure of our love for God: it must be the love of the whole heart. This was the measure of His

[15] 1 John iv. 19.

love for us, Who gave His whole Heart to the work of our redemption.

Generosity and a spirit of sacrifice are to be added to our love, for so the Sacred Heart teaches us. The love of that Heart was certainly not an inactive one: it was not a limited and a sentimental love. What again does the wound which It bears imply? When St. Margaret Mary saw our Blessed Lord displaying His Heart before her, It appeared to her as if flames were proceeding from It; and well might flames issue from a furnace of love. The Sacred Heart was always, and always continues to be, a holocaust, or whole burnt-offering to the Eternal Father, which He accepts from His well-beloved Son. In the Office for the Festival of the Sacred Heart the Church calls this Heart the victim of charity. 'Cor Jesu, Charitatis Victimam, venite adoremus!' Well may our most generous Lord ask us, what more He could have done for us than He has done through the immensity of His love. Can we dare to ask the same question of Him? We have done so little: we are so timid and so ungenerous in His service. We shrink from every sacrifice, and fear to make any effort which costs us the least pain or self-denial. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a great cure for tepidity. This is a chief cause why the Church wishes to propagate it, because she has already learnt from a happy experience that they who practise it are roused from indolence and are excited to fervour.

Humility and meekness are also taught us by this Devotion. These were the special lessons our Blessed Lord taught us through His Sacred Heart, when He said: *Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.* Nor are these to be considered as speculative virtues, or as perfections to be expected only in those who are called to an exceptional degree of holiness. The want of these virtues, or the existence of the contrary vices, is the cause of our sins in our dealings with others. Pride and a want of forbearance with others are the source of that want of brotherly charity which prevails so much in the world, and which even in those who pretend to be devout and practical Christians is not unfrequently found to exist. Do our hearts bear any resemblance whatever to His, Who forgave His enemies, Who suffered and died for them, and Who gave us an example, that we should do for others what His Heart moved Him to do for us?

Zeal for souls is another lesson of the Sacred Heart. Why did that Heart suffer so much? Not for Itself, but for the souls of men. 'Behold this Heart,' does our dearest Saviour say, 'which is so inflamed for love of men!' And if we have no sympathy whatever for the spiritual good of others, no desire for

the conversion of sinners—if we are unwilling to do anything to bring others to share in the spiritual blessings of which, through the immense Mercy of God, we are partakers—where are our faith and love? If we hate sin because of the injury it offers to God, how can we quietly witness its influence over souls, and do nothing to diminish that influence, and to shield the glory of God? When the Sacred Heart of our agonising Saviour broke in the time of His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemani, It was oppressed by the view of so many souls being lost through sin. Our souls ought to be saddened also at such a prospect, and we ought to share in the sorrow and the prayer of our loving Redeemer in behalf of sinful souls.

One more lesson we learn from this fertile source of instruction, and that is the salutary lesson of fervour in prayer. We have said, and it is the case, that it was in the time of His prayer in the Garden, at the introduction of His Passion, that the Sacred Heart of our dear Lord broke under the influence of the feelings which oppressed It. How fervent and how persevering was that sad hour's prayer! How cold and how short and easily broken off are our prayers! And why so? Because our heart is so little in our work, and our treasure is elsewhere. How beautifully does the Holy Spirit teach us that prayer is a work of the heart, and that it is towards that, and not to our words, that Almighty God bends down when He accepts the tribute which we offer to Him in the time of prayer. He rejects those who pretend to honour Him with their lips, whilst their heart is far from Him. Well did the Psalmist understand and practise this duty when, in the fervour of his soul, he cried out: *What have I in Heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth! For Thee my flesh and my heart have fainted away: Thou art the God of my heart, and my portion for ever!*[16] At another time, drawn towards God by the force of love, he exclaims: *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready!*[17] *How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.*[18] In the lives of saints who have been eminent for prayer, we find how their hearts were affected in that holy exercise. It is recorded of St. Catherine of Sienna that our Lord appeared to her on one occasion when she was in prayer, took away her heart and placed His own within her breast instead. Well known is the instance of St. Philip Neri, who, from the violent action of his heart in prayer, suffered a physical result which was externally visible; and of St. Francis Xavier, who used sometimes to feel his heart

[16] Ps. lxxii. [17] Ibid. cvii. [18] Ibid. lxxxiii.

so overflowing with the delights with which God visited him, that he used to bare his breast, and cry out: Enough, O Lord, enough!

To us these may seem exaggerated and overdrawn facts; but if we knew more of the lessons of the Sacred Heart, probably they would seem less strange and unlikely. This is certain, that we have the same loving God to deal with as the saints had, and can learn from the same source how to pray and how to love. And although hitherto we may have done but little towards arriving at a closer union with God, let the Sacred Heart to-day suggest sorrow for the past and greater fervour for the future. The ejaculation especially addressed to this source of love tells us what is the immediate blessing we ask for through this Devotion: 'Thy Sacred Heart, O Jesus, I implore: with love my heart inflame still more and more.' To-day, at least, if not every day, this will be frequently uttered by you. It will bring its blessing with it; and in the spirit of St. Alfonso Liguori, a great practiser and preacher of this devotion, add both now and every day a favourite aspiration which he has prepared for us: 'GRANT, O MY JESUS, THAT BEFORE I DIE, I MAY DO SOMETHING FOR LOVE OF THEE!'

SERMON XL.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOD'S CARE FOR INDIVIDUAL SOULS.

There shall be joy before the Angels of God over one sinner that doth penance.

THIS is the moral which our dear Lord draws from the two parables contained in the Gospel of this Sunday. It forms a portion of the beautiful fifteenth chapter of St. Luke, one of the most impressive and encouraging chapters in that gospel of mercy. The moral shows us what is the spirit of these parables, and what an important and practical principle they enforce. The principle is this: that God has a special and an unwearying care for each individual soul; that the mode in which He watches over these dear objects of His creative love is not a mere general superintendence, but that He is ever occupied and interested about each one; and that He so thoroughly concerns Himself with each single soul, that it would in some manner appear, that He withdraws His thoughts from the general whole, in order to concentrate His entire attention and solicitude upon one individual. But this one is each one: it is each soul that is in want; it is each soul that is in error; it is each soul that is struggling for Heaven; it is each soul that He has created and redeemed, and that He therefore loves and guards so anxiously.

For see how the parables are introduced. He had come to seek and to save sinners; and because He used to go in daily search after them, into town after town, and house after house, and used to converse with them one by one, His constant enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees, who never could or would understand the ways of His mercy, began as usual to murmur and to find fault with Him, saying: *This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.* Then followed the parables and their moral. He tells of a shepherd who, when one sheep happens to go astray, hastens after it with such eagerness. Whichever sheep it might be, it would be the same. He is not satisfied that out of his

flock of a hundred he has ninety-nine safe in the fold: he wants the one that is missing. And again, He tells of the poor woman who, out of a little treasure which she had earned by hard labour, loses one piece of money. She does not content herself with having the rest of her little fortune in security: her anxiety is to recover the one coin which she has missed. It is only when that which has been lost is found again, that joy follows. And then comes the moral: *So shall there be joy before the Angels of God over ONE sinner that doth penance.*

In that same chapter, and immediately after the two parables which occur in the Gospel of to-day, occurs the parable of the Prodigal Son, in which the very same principle is affirmed. The good father is represented, not rejoicing because one son remains steady and faithful at home, but because the other son, who for a time had been wayward and dissolute, returns to a sense of his duty, leaves his evil courses, and arises and comes home to his father. Then the father keeps a festival, assembles his friends to welcome the returned truant, and bids them come and share in his joy. The same text is repeated then; and the declaration is once more made of the joy which angels experience upon the conversion of one single sinner.

Let us try to understand as fully as we can, and apply for our individual advantage, the very important and practical principle which our Blessed Lord, through the means of these parables, desires to impress upon us.

I. The first act of Almighty God towards a soul shows His value of each one. He does not allow any single soul to come into existence accidentally, nor by virtue of any general law which He has established, but each is the result of a special creative act upon His part. He creates souls one by one; He infuses each soul into the body which He has allowed to be formed for it: of each one He says, as when He was about to create our first parent: Let Us make this one to Our own image and likeness. God has therefore made us, and made each of us, expressly for Himself; and so we belong to Him, and owe Him the tribute of adoration which as Creator He demands from each single soul.

Our dear Saviour also suffered and died for each one of us. He died, indeed, for the redemption of the whole world; but He died for each one of the world. He did not exclude a single one; and more than this: He positively included each of us—you and me, and each one amongst us—as He was offering His Precious Blood for the ransom of man. He thought of each of us, and of each single sin each one of us has committed, or will commit, when He was praying in His Agony and His Sacred Heart was

breaking with sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemani. So also did each of us, with each of our sins, press heavily upon Him, as He was toiling so painfully under the weight of His Cross up the steep hill of Calvary. And when He had arrived there and was nailed to the Cross, and was dying upon it, each of us was as clearly before His mind as if He were dying for us alone. For each He prayed as He begged His Father to forgive us, for we knew not what we were doing, when we were inflicting such pain upon Him by each of our sins, which He then saw in its full deformity. This is what St. Paul felt when he said, in the name of each of us, what we can and ought to say of our suffering and dying Saviour: *He loved me, and He delivered Himself for me*:[1] not for others only, but especially for me.

And the grace which, by His Incarnation and Death, He merited for us, He deals out individually to each of us. Abundant as are the showers of grace, which by those infinite merits pour down upon the redeemed world, yet they fall not indiscriminately, nor are they sown like seed thrown broadcast over the face of the earth. But like a husbandman who is sowing very precious and tender seed, He drops each grain gently and carefully where it is capable of fructifying. As each soul needs or deserves grace He deals it out, *dividing*, as St. Paul says of God's economy in distributing His graces, *to each one accordingly as He will*.[2] For it is of faith that to the just, to sinners, even to infidels, sufficient grace is given by that God of Whom St. John tells us, that He *enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world*,[3] and of Whom St. Paul says, that *He wishes all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*.[4]

And in the intercourse which He wishes each soul to keep up with Himself in the spiritual life, He attends to each as if He were dealing only with one. He listens to the prayer of each one who has recourse to Him, as if that were the only one that was appealing to His mercy. Of each one it is true, that *the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds, . . . and he will not depart till the Most High behold*.[5] Each sincere act of contrition gains its pardon: each cry for pity finds its relief: each act of love meets with its return. Even amongst the blessed spirits whom God has created to minister to His glory, and to be in readiness to do His Will in all things, He assigns one to each soul. For so says the Psalmist of each one of us in the beautiful psalm so full of hopeful thoughts, the 'Qui habitat': *He hath given His Angels charge over thee, to guard thee in all thy ways*.[6] And

[1] Gal. ii. 10. [2] 1 Cor. xii. 11. [3] John i. 9.
[4] 1 Tim. ii. 4. [5] Ecclus. xxxv. 21. [6] Ps. xc.

our text tells us how these holy spirits rejoice over one sinner that is converted. Each of us is encouraged also to choose our own special patron saint, who, we know from the practice of the Church, interests himself particularly about our own spiritual good.

The Sacraments also—those wonderful inventions of the wisdom and goodness of God for conveying grace to our souls —are instituted for men; but are instituted in order to be administered one by one to each individual person, according to his circumstances; God, at the moment and in the act of the administration, supplying the special grace of each Sacrament to each soul. Thus children are baptised one by one: Sacramental absolution produces its effect in each soul, as one by one it is fitly disposed to receive it: our dearest Lord in the most loving Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist is placed on the tongue, and enters into the breast, of each of His children, as one by one they approach to be enriched and comforted by His Presence within them, as if each were the only object of His care and love; for each consecrated Host is intended to find Its last abode in the breast of some one individual child of the Church.

Our great God too as a Lawgiver legislates for each one of His subjects. How strikingly does He not show this in the mode in which He expresses the Commandments, which He wished to be promulgated amidst the majestic ceremonial of Mount Sinai. There were assembled together all the people of Israel, who by their numbers were paying fitting homage to Him, Who had just led them out of the land of Egypt and the house of bondage. And though all the tribes and families were gathered in many thousands at the foot of the mountain, it is not to all of them in general, but to each individual that the Almighty addresses Himself, as in the singular number each Commandment is announced: *I am the Lord* THY *God*, He commences; and then proclaims His Will in the ten words of the Law: THOU *shalt not have strange gods before Me. Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord* THY *God in vain*, &c. &c. And upon the heart of each one of us He impresses the principles of His Law, giving to each of us a conscience, by which we feel within us when we are obeying or transgressing.

In the superintendence of Divine Providence it is the same; for the Creator of each of us provides for each. Our dear Lord assures and reminds us of this, when in His beautiful lesson of trusting in Providence He tells us that the very hairs of our head are numbered,[7] and that He Who watches over the birds of the

[7] Luke xii. 7.

air and the lilies of the field, values us far beyond them, and screens each of us with unwearying care. To Him, our Father Who is in Heaven, each of us is ordered to pray for our daily bread; and we are emboldened even to beg of Him to shelter us under the protection of His wings and to guard us as the apple of His eye. If we ever forget the duty of confidence which Providence ought to inspire, shall we not deserve the reproach of our Lord, as He will address us: *O ye of little faith!*[8]

In the awful judgment which awaits us at the end of our earthly career, the principle of God's dealings with each individual is most strikingly illustrated. Before the day of the great general judgment to which the whole world will be summoned, each one will have to appear before the Tribunal of God, in what is called the particular judgment. There each one stands face to face with his own Judge, and is examined as if that Judge had no one else to try, but centres His whole scrutiny upon that one alone who is then before Him. Of this day it is that St. Paul speaks when he says that *every man's work shall be manifest, for the day of the Lord shall declare it.*[9] For we die, as we are born, one by one; and after death cometh the judgment.[10] And in that Eternity towards which we are all hastening, each of us is to have his own home, and is to keep his individual existence real and distinct, as it is in this world.

How truly did our Blessed Lord, in the days of His ministry, act up to this principle of God's dealing with us! He came into this world for all men, for the general good, the redemption of the whole human race. *Come to Me,* ALL *you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you,* is His gracious invitation; and the Apostle assures us how sincerely this invitation was given, and that it was the object of the coming of the Son of God upon earth, when he says to Timothy: *This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, Who will have all men to be saved.*[11] But yet He was not satisfied with this general summons to come to Him and receive His blessing. As He had the universal power of performing miracles, but applied that power in the individual cases that were brought before Him, so, though He came to save all men, He applies His all-saving power in behalf of individual cases. He calls His Apostles one by one; and one by one we find Him converting souls. He addresses great multitudes on some occasions; but accordingly as individuals out of those multitudes are influenced, He deals with the individual and perfects his conversion. Nicodemus had heard and seen what numbers of

[8] Matt. vi. 30.
[9] 1 Cor. iii. 13.
[10] Heb. ix. 27.
[11] 1 Tim. ii. 3.

others had witnessed; but it is when he comes to our dear Lord alone, by night, for his individual instruction, that he is enlightened as to the mysteries which at first appeared so strange and unpractical. Magdalene had heard the general summons to come, if under the burden of sin, and obtain pardon and peace; and she may have pondered whether even for her there was remission for many sins, if she could command a proportionate degree of sorrow and of love. Was she disappointed? Zacheus had heard our Lord's denouncements against the rich, and also the parable of the Pharisee and the publican: *He was the chief of the publicans, and he was rich.*[12] If a publican, in spite of past extortions and frauds, could go away justified, because in a spirit of humble and confident sorrow he called out for mercy and forgiveness, why should he not try in his own case what was affirmed as a general principle, and be determined to gain the pardon from which even he was not to be excluded? He tried, and you know how he succeeded.

Time would fail me if I were to tell you of every instance; of the woman taken in adultery, the poor Samaritan woman at the well-side, the publican Levi changed into the Apostle Matthew, the penitent thief, and other individual cases of our merciful Saviour's compassionate dealing. Certainly the life and labours and the lessons of our dear Lord showed His immense love for souls; but more than that, they show the love He had for each soul for which He offered Himself to suffer, to labour, and to die.

II. Now it is time to consider another question. If God thus deals with an individual soul, as if it alone were the object over which He watches, ought not each soul to act towards God as if it alone had to do God's work, and to promote His glory by its sanctification? It is a very practical and a very fruitful thought for us to view ourselves, as if we were the one especial creature from whom our good God, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Preserver, is demanding what He has a right to demand from an object which He has made, and which He claims for Himself. It prevents our ever losing sight of our responsibility, as if we could be lost and overlooked in the crowd of creatures. We must single ourselves out as God singles us, and correspond as carefully as we can, with each act which we have seen is really exercised in our behalf individually by God. We shall thus become circumspect: we shall give definiteness and distinctness to our conduct, and guard ourselves in every moment of our life, and in every work which we perform.

We may ask ourselves, and we ought frequently to do so:

[12] Luke xix. 2.

Does God think of *me?* Is He doing so even now? He does think of me, and He watches me so closely, with such a jealous and anxious eye, as if I alone were the object of all His care. He loves me with such a warmth of affection, as if I were His only child, and mine were the only heart He was eager to draw to Himself. How beautiful was St. Thomas's exclamation when he was convinced of the fact of the resurrection, and saw once more His Saviour in the flesh: My *Lord, and* MY *God!* He seemed to wish to have Him all to himself, as if He had risen again only for him. So much like this, also, was the aspiration which the seraphic St. Francis used to find sufficient to engage him for the whole night: My God and my all! Such also was St. Paul's idea, when he expresses himself as if the whole mystery of the Incarnation and Passion had been designed for him alone: *He loved me, and He delivered Himself up for me.* This is not a selfish principle; for love is never selfish, and it is only to increase in God's love that we urge it to be practised.

This thought will impress us more deeply with a proper sense of the value of our soul. Ponder the words: *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?*[13] The terms of the comparison instituted by our Blessed Lord are *the whole world* on one side, and my *own soul* on the other: and He tells me I must prefer the latter term, and consider the former of no avail when balanced against it. My own one soul is more valuable than all the rest of the world put together. This will show, further, the necessity of watching each single action, because it is watched by God, and it may affect the destiny of something more important than the history of the whole world: my own soul. It will be a very safe caution and preservative against each single sin; for each one is seen and felt in all its deformity by Him, Whose eye is fixed with an exclusive attention upon one, whom He ever regards as if that were the only object He has to watch.

It shows the evil and danger attending the conduct of many about whom we have reason to be anxious, who, when God calls them to investigate the claims of the Catholic Church upon their submission, and who even admit those claims, put off till a further time the act which is demanded of them, and resist the Divine call, on the pretext of waiting for others. There are hundreds of individuals who thus defer corresponding with a grace which is given to each one of them, until such a time as it may please God, as they imagine, to give the same grace to others. The principle of what is called Corporate reunion is contradicted

[13] Matt. xvi. 26.

absolutely by the parables in our Gospel of to-day, from which we have been learning our lesson of the value of an individual soul. If Nicodemus had waited until all his fellow Pharisees went over in a body to obedience to Christ,—if Zacheus, instead of accepting the offer of Him who said to him: *This day I must abide in thy house*,[13] had deferred till all his fellow publicans had had a similar offer,—would our Lord have approved of such a delay, or would He not rather have had to weep over those two privileged souls, as He once wept over Jerusalem for not knowing the day of her visitation? And if I mention this, my dear brethren, it is not that, in apparent contradiction to the truth I am trying to impress upon you, I am asking you to think of others rather than of yourselves, but because in the move which is being made now-a-days towards the Catholic Church, the pretext which I have referred to is so frequently alleged, that each one of us may have an opportunity, after bringing our lesson home to ourself, to remind a neighbour of the same important principle.

I have said that this practice of making our charity really begin at home is not a selfish practice. One who loves God, and is labouring earnestly to please Him and thus to save his soul, is never selfish. We cannot love God, and we cannot hope to be saved, unless we do our duty to our neighbour. And the principle which we have been enforcing will make us view our neighbour in so high and holy a light, that he will be exalted in our eyes, even as our own soul is exalted when we fully realise its immense value. We must learn also to individualise our neighbours, and to love, not all of them in a general way, but each one of them in a special way, because each, without exception, is a creature of God. What I have convinced myself of, and what is really true, that God has such a singular love for me, is true of my neighbour also. The command which God gives us regarding others is also expressed as of one, not as of many. We must love our neighbour, not our neighbours, as ourself. Of course in loving each we love all; but we only truly love all when we love each. Each of my neighbours, then, is in God's eyes what I myself am: and why should I make an exception where God makes none? If there is one single person against whom I treasure up feelings contrary to charity, here is what I am doing—I am refusing to love one whom God loves, whom He has made to His own image, of whom my dear Saviour thought with a fulness of affection when He delivered Himself up and died for him, whom He watches over in His Providence, for whom He intends all the graces given in the

[13] Luke xix. 5.

Sacraments, and whom He has made capable of being admitted one day to the possession of Himself in the kingdom of His glory.

This was an argument used by our Blessed Lord when He was cautioning His disciples against the sin of scandal. Speaking of little children, He pleads in their behalf because of what God had done for them, saying: *Their Angels in heaven always see the face of My Father Who is in heaven.*[15] So it is with each of your neighbours. Each has his Angel, and for the sake of that Angel, and of the predilection of God for each of your brethren, you ought to drive away at once from your mind whatever will be inconsistent with that love which God bears, and which, for God's sake, we ought to bear to every neighbour.

Such is the lesson suggested to us by our dear Lord's words addressed to us to-day. It is a lesson intended for each one amongst you, as every lesson taught by Him is intended: not for all in general, but for each one in particular. Take it home with you, and ponder upon it; and when you remember how God loves you, you must be impressed with a more lively sense of the value of your soul. Do nothing that can injure that soul; for all the world beside could not be given in exchange for it. God and His Angels, and the Church upon earth and in Heaven, are all interested about its welfare. They are all eager for the salvation of one soul, and that one is yours.

[15] Matt. xviii. 10.

SERMON XLI.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

PURITY OF INTENTION.

We have been labouring all the night, and have taken nothing.

The incident recorded in to-day's Gospel, one of the early miracles of our dear Lord, is very suggestive of many practical lessons. The facts are these. Our Blessed Lord was just commencing His missionary course, and was still engaged in the work of calling His Apostles, and of forming them for their future noble and laborious career. He had already, by His preaching and His intercourse with the people, manifested His wisdom and miraculous power, and had been followed by crowds who wondered at the signs He had performed amongst them, and were moved by gratitude for the blessings they had received. He comes to the bank of the beautiful Lake of Genesareth; and as the multitude in their admiration were pressing closely upon Him, He withdraws Himself from their importunity by going into a boat; and moving off to a convenient distance, He continues His instructions. The boat which He preferred for His chair of truth was St. Peter's: emblematical, as the Fathers tell us,[1] of the future supremacy and infallibility of the Apostolic See of St. Peter. When He has finished addressing the people, He bids the Apostle to launch out into the deep, and to let down his nets for a draught of fish. Then it was that St. Peter answered in the words of our text: *Master, we have been labouring all the night, and have taken nothing.* But he is determined to obey the order given to him, and feels confident that his obedience will be blessed; and therefore he adds: *but at Thy word I will let down the net.* How abundantly is his confidence rewarded! The fruitless labour of previous hours is outbalanced by the work of a few minutes; and so abundant is his success, that those in the other ship are obliged to be summoned to his aid; and both ships are so laden as to be almost sinking under the weight.

[1] See Colin Lindsay's *Evidence for the Papacy*, p. 8.

Here we may pause ; because it is from this part of the incident that I am proposing to draw our instruction for to-day ; and this instruction will be on the very practical subject of Purity of Intention. This is a subject to which it is of the highest importance to attend ; for it affects most tellingly that state of perfection to which every Christian is called, and towards the attainment of which all his efforts will be fruitless, unless he adopt the means which are here implied, and which are easily accessible to all.

I. This day's Gospel clearly shows how the same action differs in its result, according to the spirit in which it is performed, or accordingly as it is or is not blessed by God. And it shows even more than this, inasmuch as we learn from it that a little done for God's sake is far more profitable than a great amount of labour done for any other motive. St. Peter and his companions had toiled during the whole of the night, but nothing came of it : they afterwards, in obedience to a command which they respected, laboured only for a few minutes, and they were abundantly repaid. How many of us may have occasion, because we have forgotten the proper motive which ought to influence us, to exclaim, either at the end of a day when we examine our conscience at night, or on looking back upon the past years of an active and anxious life : We have been labouring all this time, and have done nothing for Heaven ? God grant we may not have to say so at the end of our days, when we are on the point of entering into that eternity, for which our whole life ought to be a preparation ! It is in order to be more secure against having thus to reproach ourselves, that we must attend to the very important lesson of Purity of Intention.

It was at the commencement of His missionary career, even before He had filled up the number of the apostolic college, that our Blessed Lord performed the miracle and taught the lesson which we are now considering ; as if He intended, early in the period in which He was instructing His followers, to teach them the merit of obedience and of acting in conformity with His commands. Peter had not yet in the name of the Apostles spoken the words : *Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee*,[2] and you observe that it was after this miracle that, *leaving all things, they followed Him.* Well might they, after such a reward as they had received by doing what He had commanded, cling to Him, and give up all anxiety about their temporal affairs ! He demanded of them, when He told them to let down their nets, nothing extraordinary or difficult, but only what formed a portion of their daily and nightly occupation. And this is precisely what Almighty God always expects and requires of us : nothing extra-

[2] Matt. xix. 27.

ordinary, but only a good and submissive will in the ordinary duties incident to our state in life.

Practical sanctity (and nothing is more practical than sanctity) consists in doing well, and with a good intention, what we have to do. Our daily duties form the works by which we are one day to be judged: from the very fact of our doing them day after day, they will be judged and examined into, and thus they will follow us into eternity. If what St. Paul tells us is true, as it must be, that God in His just judgment *will render to every man according to his works*,[3] it is about our works we must be most solicitous. They will never be lost sight of; and as truly as we perform them now, so will they reappear at some future time, and undergo the scrutiny to which they will be subjected, when each one of us will have to give in judgment an account of our stewardship.

As we are the creatures and servants of God, we have nothing else to do but *what* He wills, and we must do it *as* He wills. We are not our own masters, and independent of God; but we are His servants: from Him we have to expect our wages, but only on condition that they have been earned by obedience to His orders. Thus the Psalmist says: *Behold, as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters: as the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress: so are our eyes unto the Lord our God.*[4] Our dear Lord reminds us of this truth when He tells us that we cannot serve two masters: we can be faithful to one only, and He reminds who that One is. As the Prophet Jonas answered those who asked him many questions, whence he came, who he was, and what was his destiny: *I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God of Heaven*,[5] so ought we to prove in all our acts that we are Christians, engaged only in the service of our God.

As a fact, we are always doing something or other. The hours of the day pass by, and each hour has its occupation. Even if it has been spent in idleness or in sinful pleasure, the hour has had its run and its result. But in these days of activity, men work oftentimes with great energy and devotedness during the time they assign to the duties of their calling. Something is done, and a great deal possibly is done in the course of the day, but how or for whom? If only for the world, then God has been forgotten, and His claims overlooked; if all has been offered to God, then a double result has followed: we have done the duties of our state, and have spent a day which will be rewarded hereafter. The habit of Purity of Intention will secure for us this

[3] Rom. ii. 6. [4] Ps. cxxii. [5] Jonas i. 9.

double result, and hence its importance. Let us now see how to practise it.

II. There are three questions which we ought to ask ourselves regarding each day's work; and if we attend to these, and see that we can answer them favourably, our lesson will be understood, and will be well carried out in practice. First: Is there any act which God would *not* have me to do? Second: Do I omit any act which God *would* have me to do? Third: Do I try and do each act *as* God would have me to do it? Let us take these one by one, and we shall see how by attending to them we can, without adding to our day's work, derive so rich a result from the labours of a day.

Is there any act which God would *not* have me to do? For of course, if there is, such an act is out of the influence of a pure intention, inasmuch as what is forbidden by God, cannot be offered to Him with the view of pleasing Him. This question may affect our state of life in general, or only certain individual actions. If our state be one which is of itself forbidden, we must at once renounce it, as St. Matthew renounced his calling the moment our Lord ordered him to do so. But if, as is usually the case, our state of life is an approved one, and one marked out for us by Providence, it is to the details of our duty we must direct our attention, whilst we endeavour to ascertain whether our conscience reproaches us with reference to any one of the occupations of a day. At the time of our examination of conscience at night, or in preparing for confession, this question must be put, and it must suggest sorrow and amendment, if we find reason to blame ourselves for having done in any single instance what we know to be against the will of God in our regard.

Again, we have to ask ourselves: Do I omit any act which God *would* have me to do? because our virtue is not to be simply negative. The object of God's Commandments, which are the intimation of His Will, is not simply to forbid evil, but to enjoin what is good. We have each day certain positive duties towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves: duties corresponding to our state of life which must be complied with, or else we make ourselves guilty of a sin of omission. Each day has its duty of prayer; it may have duties of obligation with regard to others, the neglect of which may constitute sins against charity or justice; and it always has duties of self-watchfulness, a right employment of time, the choice of company, and such like, which we owe to ourselves, in order that we may walk worthy of a Christian calling. Both of these questions concern something beyond Purity of Intention; they regard the negative or positive observance of the

Commandments, and have for their object the evil which we must avoid, and the good which we must do, in order to sanctify and to save our souls. But we must attend to them, or else there will be no chance of our satisfying our duty regarding the third question, which most directly concerns Purity of Intention.

This third question is: Do I try and do each act *as* God would have me do it? Here is the real question of intention. The act is supposed to be done: our question is, How and with what spirit is it done? The Gospel of to-day has shown us how the same act differs in value and in result, according to the spirit which directs it. This at once brings before us a principle, which is enforced in those treaties of moral theology which treat upon human actions: namely, that there is no one action which is really indifferent in regard to him who performs it. What is meant by an indifferent action is one which in itself is not considered as either good or bad. Such are many of the actions which fill up our day's work. Our meals, our recreations, our alternative acts of remaining at home or going out: such are not in themselves meritorious acts, nor are they bad actions. In themselves, I say; because, when in addition to the act, we consider the person who does it, and the end which prompts it, an element is introduced which must not be overlooked. We can easily see that if in our meals we indulge in sensuality, that which in itself was innocent may bring injury to the soul. If we go out for the sake of vanity or for a sinful intention, our act is corrupted, and is displeasing in God's eyes. When the Psalmist prayed: *May the Lord guard thy coming in and thy going out,*[6] he showed how such a simple act needs the blessing of God. And when St. Paul bids us, whether we eat or drink, or whatever else we do, do all for the glory of God,[7] he affirms precisely the same.

In every deliberate action which we perform, for it is these we are more particularly considering, there is present what may be called its body and its soul: something like the outward and inward parts of a Sacrament. The body, or outward part, is the act itself which is done; the soul, or inward part, is the deliberate end or intention for which it is done. If an action is not in itself wrong, but is indifferent, if it be offered to God, and be done in order to please Him, this soul and inward reality gives life and value to it, and it is well-pleasing in God's eyes. If, on the other hand, it be done through a wrong motive, through vanity or sensuality, God condemns it, and it will be imputed to us as sinful in a greater or a less degree. Nay, more than this, even an act

[6] Ps. cxx. [7] 1 Cor. x. 31.

which in its substance would be good, may be utterly vitiated and become sinful because of the motive which animates it. Thus our Lord condemned the prayers and alms-deeds of the Pharisees, who did their actions through vanity, to gain human praise.

In order to help us to practise this purity of intention, and to secure to all the actions of the day the value which may be attached to them by this means, we should attend to this duty, especially on two occasions. The first occasion is on the morning of each day, when we are asking in our prayers God's blessing on the labours of that day. At this time we ought to offer to God every thought, word, and action of the day, declaring that we propose to do everything in accordance with His Will, to promote His honour and glory, and beg Him during that day to keep us from all sin. Another occasion is at the commencement of every action of importance, or when about to perform a duty of more than ordinary responsibility. And, indeed, the repeating from time to time in the day of the morning's general offering is much to be attended to: it helps us to live more closely with God, and gives additional blessing to our labours. The *virtual* intention, as it is called, with which we do all our actions by virtue of the morning's offering, is good: an *actual* intention attached to each single act is better. The frequent repetition of this actual intention will assist us towards that *habitual* good spirit which animates the Saints, who see God in every act, and who thus make each to have the nature and the value of a prayer. Carefulness about Purity of Intention would certainly contribute to form many more Saints in this poor world of ours.

III. Now, my dear brethren, let us consider why a practice, really so simple and so associated with blessings, is yet so much neglected. There are three obstacles or enemies which stand in its way; and our duty is to surmount and conquer these, as we really can, with a good will and God's grace. The first enemy is Indolence. There is such an habitual carelessness and thoughtlessness on the part of many, and perhaps the majority, of Christians with regard to labouring for Heaven, that the idea of the one thing necessary is by no means kept prominently in their mind; and therefore it does not occur to them to direct every action towards the end for which God has made them, and for which they ought to be exerting themselves. Whatever implies an effort is avoided by them; and because the directing of each act towards God, either by a general and virtual offering in the morning or by occasional offerings during the day, seems to them to require exertion, it is omitted as being a work of supererogation beyond what they care to attempt. Yet these indolent per-

sons profess to believe in Heaven; they admit that our Lord said that this Heaven demands violence:[8] that St. Paul teaches that no one can be crowned unless he labour as he ought.[9] Only let them consider how little exertion an act of Purity of Intention requires—just a turning of our thought to God and a word of offering to Him—and even they would not refuse it. Nay, because so much is given for the very little required in this exercise, they ought to be amongst the readiest to accept the condition.

Another enemy and obstacle is Self-love. This always stands in the way of perfection and of our obedience to the calls of God. Therefore our Lord ordered battle to be declared and waged against it, and wishes His followers to deny themselves. Sensuality and self-indulgence are the motives of very many of our actions. We act just to please ourselves, to gratify our taste and our evil inclinations: therefore many of our actions are in themselves sinful, and many, which are not sinful in themselves, become so because we do them for so corrupt an end. Apply in this respect St. Paul's saying: *Whether you eat or drink, &c. do all for the glory of God;* and we need not go further to find an illustration how self-gratification is constantly allowed to have the preference over this glory.

A third obstacle is Vanity and Human Respect. This is a motive which substitutes the approval or the fear of man in place of the will and command of God. It is the fertile source of many positive sins; but it is also the cause why many actions which might be sanctified, if done for God and offered to Him, are deprived of all merit and reward, and are turned against God, by being sacrificed to His enemy, the world: *Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father Who is in Heaven.*[10] This is a warning of our Blessed Lord which He oftentimes repeats. The great sin of the world is that it tries to substitute itself for Almighty God, and demands the homage of men in His stead. It strives to displace the Presence of God by its own presence, and everywhere thrusts itself before us, and claims our service. That we cannot serve two masters, it knows as well as our Lord knew; and because it wants to be our only master, it asks for every one of our actions, and thus excludes the possibility of a pure intention in any one. Our own experience tells us of its influence; and it only has to be mentioned, to be recognised as an enemy to the practice we are inculcating. Acts of Purity of Intention will insensibly diminish the power of this great obstacle, and will be securing for God the tribute of our obedience.

The great advantages of the practice of Purity of Intention

[8] Matt. xi. 12. [9] 2 Tim. ii. 5. [10] Matt. vi. 1.

are, that it makes sin impossible, it forms within us habits of virtue, and it facilitates our gaining Heaven. For how can we imagine sin as consistent with the conduct of one who does each of his actions in order to please God? Our dear Lord could say two things of Himself: *I always do the things which please My Father*;[11] and again He could say: *Which of you shall convince Me of sin?*[12] We are bound to imitate His example, and it is this practice which will secure our doing so.

Habits of virtue are also formed within us by the exercise of Purity of Intention. It draws us more closely to God, and enables us to live more in union with Him. Faith, hope, and love, with obedience, resignation, and fervour in prayer, are all encouraged by the acts which we thus offer to God. And as Almighty God is always abundant in rewarding whatever is done for Him, however little it may be, even giving us a return for a cup of cold water given in charity for His sake, He enriches our souls for all the little offerings made by us, and so gladly accepted by Him. Purity of Intention acts like the exercise of Presence of God; it makes us walk worthy of our vocation, and contributes most effectually to our becoming saints.

Our gaining Heaven is consequently facilitated by this practice; and not only because sin is prevented and habits of virtue are formed within us, but because we are storing up works which will be reckoned in our favour at the time of our future judgment. To those who have neglected such a means, it will be with bitter regret they will look upon all the labours which had no result, but which they will then see, though too late, might have made them saints, if they had only done in a proper spirit what they did for themselves and the world. God really requires no more efforts from us for Heaven than the world does in its service, nor oftentimes does He demand half as much. We see people toiling from early morning through a long day, for the wages of the world: we hear of men leaving home and friends, exposing themselves to danger, and making great and painful sacrifices, for the sake of ambition or of worldly gain. If they did only half as much for the good of their souls and for God's sake, we should admit that they would far outstrip us in our feeble attempts to be doing something for Heaven.

How good is God, Who rewards so abundantly the most ordinary duties when done for His sake! And how willing, then, ought we to be to do all for Him, Who repays actions apparently so indifferent by so great a weight of glory, and the labours of time, which is so short, by the glory of an eternity which never ends!

[11] John viii. 29. [12] Ibid. viii. 46.

SERMON XLII.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE DUTY OF RECONCILIATION.

If thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave thy gift there before the altar, and go first and be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift.

THESE concluding words of to-day's Gospel express in the strongest form the immense importance of the lesson which, through them, our Blessed Lord was anxious to convey. This lesson is His own favourite one of meekness, forbearance, brotherly love and union. For see how He here enforces it. One may be seen to have entered the temple for the purpose of offering to God in that holy place a gift doubly acceptable to Him: acceptable because it answered the end of sacrifice, the supreme act of religion; and acceptable because it was an act of obedience to His own law. But a thought comes across his mind. He remembers that something has occurred to cause a difference between himself and a brother: the law of charity has been infringed: an unkind word has been spoken: an unfriendly act has been done, and hearts which had been once united are alienated from each other. And as he is advancing towards the altar with his gift, Almighty God, *who is the God not of dissension, but of peace*,[1] who knows the secrets and reads the thoughts of the heart, awakens within the mind of the offerer the memory of this violation of charity, and suggests the necessity of a prompt reconciliation. And so he hesitates as to what he ought to do: offer his gift, and take an early opportunity of being reconciled, or leave the act of religion unaccomplished, and satisfy at once the requirements of charity. The concluding words of the Gospel tell him how he is to solve his doubt, and what course to pursue. It may cost him some confusion to go away in the midst of the duty he has commenced; but the confusion will be before men, whilst there will be joy before the Angels; and therefore let him leave his gift there

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

before the altar unoffered, let him go and be reconciled to his brother, and then return and complete his unfinished work.

I have said that this is a strong, and a very strong way of expressing the obligation of speedy reconciliation with those with whom we may be at variance; but it shows its great necessity. Our Blessed Saviour was not given to exaggeration: His words are words of the strictest truth. He must have considered the duty of reconciliation as very imperative; and if He did, we must do the same, and we must act up to what this duty demands of us. Let us try and convince ourselves of the necessity of carrying out what is here so strongly inculcated. It is a very practical question that we here have to deal with. That it is attended with difficulty we cannot deny. But it is just because of this difficulty that we must exert ourselves the more to master the principle and the practice of the lesson.

I. As our dear Lord refers to an instance of offering a gift or sacrifice, in order that we may view our duty of reconciliation in the light in which He puts it before us, as one more imperative than such a tribute, we will just for one moment consider how God values sacrifice, and to what it is that He prefers an act demanded by the law of fraternal charity. Thus we shall see more clearly what our Blessed Saviour intends.

Sacrifice, as the supreme act of religion, has always been acceptable to Almighty God; and He Himself has commanded that it should be offered to Him, as an acknowledgment of His dominion and His mastership over life and death. It is a beautiful illustration and expression of the dependence of the creature upon his Creator: the creature taking something over which he has control, and holding it up to be accepted by God, as a declaration that from Him it came, and to Him it essentially belongs. God Himself therefore, who has suggested this duty, has also legislated for it. In the old Levitical law we read of the details of sacrificial worship commanded and drawn out by Himself. It is by this mode especially that He wills us to express our dependence, our thanksgiving, our craving for pardon, and our petitions for all graces and blessings. For these same ends has been instituted the Great Sacrifice of the new law, of which those of the older dispensations were shadows and figures, and through which they gained their efficacy.

God's claims are so much higher than those of any creature, that He has willed that sacrifice should be an expression of the admission of these claims. To Him alone it can be offered: to sacrifice to a creature would be an act of idolatry, because it would be giving absolute and supreme worship to another than God. In

giving us the Commandments by which we fulfil our duties to our God and our neighbour, He has made the distinction between the two Tables, and He declares Himself a jealous God with regard to the observance of this distinction. Our first duty must be to Him : our second to our neighbour. With regard especially to sacrifice, as implied in the duties of the first Commandment, He announces His anger against those who are unfaithful, when He declares to the children of Israel : *When thou hast made a vow to the Lord thy God, thou shalt not delay to pay it, because the Lord thy God will require it. And if thou delay, it shall be imputed to thee for a sin.*[2]

I remind you, my dear brethren, of God's value and love for sacrifice, not by way of digression, but that you may the more perfectly enter into the mind of our Blessed Lord in His mode of impressing upon us the duty of perfect and prompt reconciliation with an offended neighbour. God loves sacrifice ; but He is unwilling to receive it from one who is at variance with his brother, until the requirements of charity have been satisfied and the work of reconciliation effected. He insists, indeed, that His claims upon us are far beyond those of our fellow-men, and He is jealous that this superiority upon His part should be admitted. But there is something so sacred in His own law of brotherly love, that He is willing to forego what is not essential in His regard, in order that that should be complied with first which is essential in our neighbour's regard. He can wait ; and He prefers waiting until the offering is made to Him in a proper spirit, and comes from a heart free from ill-will against another. He would rather wait for ever than receive a gift from an uncharitable heart.

To those that are thus ill-disposed, by not having a spirit of charity, and who are unwilling to be reconciled to their neighbour, Almighty God acts as He did to the priests of Israel who showed themselves unworthy of their sacred office. He declared that He would no longer accept their sacrifices, but would utterly reject them. Thus does He say through the prophet Malachy : *I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will not receive a gift at your hand.*[3] Obedience, He has declared, is more acceptable to Him than sacrifice ; but reconciliation is an act of obedience. Love for our neighbour is a proof of our love for God ; and we are without love for Him, and therefore in an unfit state to appear with our gift before Him, when we are wanting in love to our brother. God seeks yourself rather than your gift, says St. Augustine ;[4] but it is yourself you refuse when you fail in brotherly love. Observe, too, that in our dear Lord's words which we are

[2] Deut. xxiii. 21. [3] Mal. i. 10. [4] Apud à Lapide, in locum.

considering He uses the word brother rather than neighbour; for He wishes the union between His followers to be of a more intimate and loving nature than that which can be expected from others who know not His law, and have not been influenced by His example.

When is it that you come up to offer your gift at the altar, and that you ought to shrink back in confusion, upon the thought striking you that there is a difference between yourself and a brother? Whenever you pray you are making an offering to God, and your dear Saviour, in the prayer which He has taught you, has secured the condition of forgiveness and charity towards your neighbour, when He orders you only to ask for forgiveness from God on the condition of your granting it to others. For although it is not strictly upon forgiveness, but upon reconciliation, our admonition is given to-day, the principle is the same. If we are unwilling to forgive, we refuse reconciliation. Whenever we come into the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, or assist at Holy Mass, we are in a more direct manner approaching with a gift to the altar. But most directly does the solemn caution of our Blessed Lord affect us when we are preparing for the most holy duty we can ever perform, that of approaching to Holy Communion. If in your preparation for Holy Communion, particularly if in your previous Confession, when you are following St. Paul's order of proving yourself[5] before eating of this Bread of Life, you find that there is a cause of want of charity between yourself and a brother, do remove it first. Defer your Holy Communion until this obstacle is removed. It is not I, it is your dear Saviour who orders it. It is He Who tells you to leave your work of devotion unfulfilled till your duty of charity has been complied with. Much as He desires you to approach to Him, He had rather you would keep away, and even disappoint Him in His wish for union with you, than that you should offer Him a heart so unlike His own, an uncharitable and an unforgiving heart. Communion implies union among those of whom St. Paul reminds us: *we all partake of one Bread.*[6] Those who approach to this Adorable Sacrament ought to be in a holy state; but where there is not charity, there is no holiness.

II. We see, then, the principle and the law by which we are to be guided. We must admit its necessity; and now let us proceed to practice. However difficult to human nature under certain circumstances the observance of this law may be, the first matter to decide upon is its necessity. We have seen that it is a law: a law strongly insisted upon by Almighty God, and there-

[5] 1 Cor. xi. 28. [6] Ibid. x. 17.

fore it must be observed, and observed by each one amongst us. It is a law made for each individual: it is not merely a general law, from which individuals may pretend to claim exemption. It is as binding and as universally binding as any one of the Commandments, and therefore like them it is proposed in the singular number. If *thou* offer, &c. Faith has its difficulties, and these difficulties are to be found in the Mysteries of Religion, which, however difficult, must be believed. Practice has its difficulties also, and however great they may be, yet the practice must be observed.

To suppose that the Christian law demands of us nothing except what is easy in practice and requires no effort, is to be degrading it to a level with unrevealed and uninspired systems. This is our Blessed Lord's argument, both in the Gospel of to-day and, as we shall see a little later, in other parts of His lessons also. *Unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and the Pharisees*, He says, *you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.* A little later on, in the same Sermon on the Mount from which to-day's Gospel is taken, He contrasts the greater perfection in charity which He insists upon, with the less perfect observance which prevailed elsewhere. *You have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you: Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and unjust.*[7] Consistently with this command is the instruction of the Apostle: *If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat: if he be thirsty give him to drink.*[8]

Our duty towards those with whom we may have had a difference is both negative and positive; that is to say, there is something forbidden and something commanded. What we are forbidden, is to exclude any one from our charity. The law which commands us to love our neighbour as ourself is an universal law. It excludes no one. You must not, therefore, treasure up malice against any one, or refuse reconciliation when your neighbour duly solicits it. You must not exclude those who have injured you from a share in your prayers, or from your works of mercy when you are aware that they are in grievous want. If one who has offended you in a matter either of charity or of justice offer reasonable satisfaction, you must not refuse it; otherwise, your conduct is vindictive, and you are usurping God's dominion; for to Him alone, as He tells us, belongs revenge.[9]

[7] Matt. v. 43, 45. [8] Rom. xii. 20. [9] Deut. xxxii. 35.

Your positive duty, or what you are commanded to do, results from a law which binds you the moment a cause of offence has arisen. At that moment you become amenable to a special law of charity. Just as when a person is in a state of perfect health, all parts of the system are so completely in harmony, that he is not sensible of one part more than of other; but the moment one is injured or gets in any degree out of order, that part makes itself to be felt, and he is drawn to notice it, and to offer or seek for relief,—so it may oftentimes be the case that we are living so quietly and peacefully with all about us, that no one individual seems to be demanding from us any exceptional attention. But if we become aware that any one has wronged us, or that we have said or done that which has wronged another, that person becomes there and then a special object of our notice, and towards him a special duty binds us. That duty is a willingness to forgive and to be reconciled. The text which we are considering ought at that moment to arise in our mind, and we must be in readiness to act up to its spirit.

This willingness to forgive is only an inward feeling, and we may too easily flatter ourselves that it exists within us. The proof will be in our readiness to show it outwardly, and in actually showing it when the occasion arises. If we are determined never again to speak to a person with whom we had before been on friendly terms, or to refuse his advances to reconciliation if he were to make them, such an inward determination is inconsistent with brotherly love, which has its seat in the heart. Such a heart is perverse; and as long as that determination is deliberately entertained, such an one is in an habitual state of uncharitableness. Let him not come and offer his gift in such a state, for the God of charity will not accept it.

In outward proof of your willingness to be reconciled, and to show that your inward feeling is sincere, you ought not to refuse the ordinary signs of good will: especially, though it may not be obligatory upon you at all times to be the first to offer these signs, you ought not to refuse to return them when they are offered. Our Blessed Lord speaks expressly upon a very practical matter of saluting an offended or offending brother. *If you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens this?*[10] This is a point which is much more frequently decided in practice upon the principles of worldly pride, than upon those of Christian brotherly love. If you are conscious that you have given the offence, you ought on meeting the offended person to be the first to offer the sign of recognition; and in case you are the offended party, you ought

[10] Matt. v. 47.

to return the sign when offered by the other. If not, how can you escape the rebuke given by our Blessed Lord? Sometimes the cause of disagreement is as much the fault of one as of the other; in which case you ought not to wait, but salute and speak at once; otherwise the difference grows inveterate, and becomes perpetuated. There are wounds which are much more easily healed by a speedy act than by delay. In every case it is safer for your conscience' sake to make the offer. Do you not feel that to do so is more in accordance with the spirit of your loving Saviour, and that to refuse it savours most of worldly pride? I am not pretending to exhaust this subject, but only aim at saying enough for very practical purposes.

All this, it may occur to you, is easy to understand in theory, and you will not deny the principle; but in practice, you say, it is very hard to carry out. I don't deny that it is hard; but if God requires it, it must not be refused. You must make up your mind to do hard things in order to gain Heaven, and this comes amongst those hard things. Remember that Christianity implies a higher perfection, a perfection which costs more, than heathenism or the world. Just look at our text and study it. Is there no effort demanded therein? To face the confusion which follows upon breaking off abruptly in a work commenced, probably in the presence of others, and to go and seek for your brother, and ask him to pardon you, or at least to give him the opportunity of clearing up a misunderstanding: does this cost nothing? And yet is it not prescribed by our holy Teacher?

Depend upon it, the source of the difficulty is to be found in a spirit of pride and worldliness. This is the spirit which stands in the way of reconciliation, and which perpetuates differences and want of charity. Our Blessed Lord always associates meekness with humility. The meek are those who show forbearance, are not easily offended, and are always glad to renew a broken love. And the humble are those who are more inclined to blame themselves than others. And so one who is meek and humble is charitable also. *Charity thinketh no evil: is not provoked to anger: is patient and kind: dealeth not perversely.*[11] Suppose you were more humble than you are, would you be so easily offended, and would you find it so hard to offer the hand of reconciliation, or to accept it cheerfully when offered?

If you will insist that it is the other person's place to take the first step in being reconciled, and he thinks that it is your place (as he has equal right to do), and if consequently neither of you makes the advance, how is the reconciliation ever to be made?

[11] 1 Cor. xiii. 4, &c.

Our Lord, in His advice to-day, says that if a brother hath *anything* against us, we must seek for reconciliation. He does not make distinctions as to who should be the first to make the move. He says *you* ought to do it, and He means this advice for each person. If God were to act on your principle, of not being reconciled with you, and not admitting you again to His friendship until you had been the first to approach to Him, could you ever be pardoned? You cannot approach towards Him unless He invite you. It is He Who says to you: Come to Me for pardon; and when you do go and obtain pardon, it is only because His grace has drawn you, and your conversion has therefore begun with Him.

Take a high and a supernatural view of your neighbour's soul, and you will not then allow these miserable low-principled differences to be encouraged. Remember Who made that soul, for Whom it has been made, Whose image it bears, what is its destiny, Who has redeemed it, and Whose it is. God has made that soul for Himself; and so it is with an object which belongs to Him, and which He loves and values, that you are allowing yourself to disagree. Which is right in his view of that brother: God Who loves him, or you who disdain him? Both you and your brother are made for Heaven: you must not despair of your own salvation, and you have no right whatever to despair of his. If therefore it is intended, as it is by God, that both of you should meet in Heaven, why should you keep aloof from each other now? You cannot imagine dislikes and differences and petty jealousies existing in Heaven; and for that reason you ought to cultivate now those habits of love for one another, which you hope that one day both of you will be exercising in that home of peace.

One advantage also that accompanies your act, when you go generously and seek for reconciliation, is that it is not an act which will ever excite a scruple in your soul. Some souls are so ungenerous in their dealing with God, that they do get scrupulous and uneasy about the mode in which they fulfil certain duties demanded by Him. Has it ever been known that a person has been scrupulous about having been reconciled too easily with an offended brother? You may have plenty of reason to be scrupulous for not being reconciled soon or sincerely enough; you cannot be scrupulous for having been speedy and generous in such a case.

Life is too short and already too full of cares for us to diminish its usefulness, and to add to its troubles by encouraging dissension. The soul is too great and too valuable for us to take such

a low miserable view of its noble aspirations, as to be standing upon trifles when what is eternal is in question. Nay, I must add, the law of God is too sacred and too awful for us to measure against it the foolish and vain principles of the world, whose maxims are so opposite to His, and whose honour is oftentimes defended only by acts of pride and self-seeking. God has a right to demand what He does demand of you; and if He demands it, He has a right, as He has the power also, to enforce it. Through a spirit, then, of love and obedience to Him Who is the Creator, the Father, and the Judge of yourself and your neighbour—through a spirit of love for your neighbour whom God loves, and whom you must love in God and for God—study and practise the lesson taught to you by your dear Saviour to-day. If you refuse love to a brother, you do indeed refuse it to Him; and can you do that? If you grant it to a brother, you grant it to Him; and can you refuse that? Answer these questions, but answer them by the only true proof which will show your sincerity: not by words, but by act. Be assured that he is a true and practical exponent of the wishes and law of our dear Lord who says to us: *My little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*[12]

[12] 1 John xiii. 18.

SERMON XLIII.

SS. PETER AND PAUL.

Let us praise men of renown, and our fathers in their generation.

The solemn and glorious Festival which the Church is celebrating to-day cannot but fill every faithful and loyal heart with feelings of triumph and of joy. For it is the Festival of our own fathers in the faith: the great heroes of a cause so dear to every one of us: the first founders and propagators, under Christ, of a Church which is our truest home here below, and in which we are in a state of preparation for gaining our eternal home hereafter. And if the wise man considered it a duty, in the days of the olden dispensation, to look back with reverence and gratitude upon the patriarchs that had gone before, and to praise men of renown and those that had been the fathers of the Church of the old Law, must we not be animated by a similar spirit, and rejoice in praising those whom Almighty God selected as the first pillars and preachers of the more privileged Church of the new Law: Saints, so faithful to their duty, so devoted to their cause, and so successful in their noble career?

For the Church, my dear brethren, is never ungrateful: she never forgets what she owes to those who watched over her infancy, nursed her in her earlier years, guided her so successfully through her first struggles and dangers, and achieved her first conquests. Therefore does she celebrate with joy the Festival which she has instituted in honour of two of her foremost champions. She will not sever now those who upon earth were joined in a common love, ended their course, as we piously believe, at the same place and on the same day, and are now enjoying a fellowship of glory and happiness in Heaven. To them the Church directs our thoughts, calls for our loyalty and our devotion, and invites us to study and to practise the lesson of their lives.

I. As in the Gospel history St. Peter stands prominent amongst the Apostles, so does the Church ever manifest his prominence; and she is paying one tribute to it in the solemnity of

to-day. This holy Apostle, Prince of the Apostles as he is rightly called, was brother to St. Andrew, and was called to follow Christ through the means of his brother. St. Andrew had been a follower of St. John the Baptist, and was by him led to be one of the first disciples of our Blessed Lord. No sooner had he experienced the privilege and happiness of such a call, than he hastened to summon his brother Simon to share the grace with him. *We have found the Messias*, is the announcement made by Andrew, and it is enough to draw Simon, who was one of those that were expecting the fulfilment of prophecies which were then ready to be accomplished. The moment Jesus sees the one that He had foreknown as His future Vicar, *looking upon him, He said: Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter.*[1] And thus, at the commencement of his Apostleship, he is appointed to the place of dignity amongst the rest, and receives a name expressive of the office intended for him, of being, under Christ, the chief foundation of the Church of the new Law.

Everywhere we find the headship which was bestowed upon him at the time of his first call, affirmed in the Gospel history. We find him uniformly named first in the various lists of the Apostles; we find him chosen to be present when our Lord would wish to give any exceptional sign of favour to any of His followers, as upon Thabor at His Transfiguration, and in Gethsemani in the onset of His Passion. He acts as the representative and spokesman of the Apostolic College, as we find in the noble profession of faith in the Divinity of Christ, contained in the Gospel of this Festival; and again, in paying the tribute money in the joint name of his Master and himself, as we read in the chapter which immediately follows, the seventeenth of St. Matthew. Regarding him, we find our Blessed Lord expressing unusual solicitude, when in His address to His Apostles after the Last Supper, in speaking about His Kingdom, that is to say His Church, He abruptly breaks in upon the thread of His discourse, and prophetically announces to Peter the indefectibility of his faith.[2] Already He had given an intimation of his chair being the chair of truth, when He chose his ship by preference to preach to the crowds assembled on the bank of the lake of Genesareth, and promised that he should be preëminently the fisher of men.[3]

At the time of the bitter Passion we have the humiliating scene of his denial of his Divine Master, when in a moment of indiscreet zeal, his personal love for our dear Lord made him expose himself to a danger which he was not called upon to

[1] John i. 42. [2] Luke xxii. 31. [3] Ibid. v. 1-10.

confront. But it is quickly atoned for by bitter tears, and is not allowed to stand in the way of the confirmation of the promise of supremacy and infallibility previously given. For he has an opportunity after the Resurrection of three times making a profession of his love, and he receives in return a triple assurance of pastoral preëminence.[4]

In the Acts of the Apostles we find him prominent amongst the rest, presiding at the election of Mathias :[5] coming forward to address the devout men of every nation under the sun on the day of Pentecost :[6] performing the first recorded miracle after that day at the beautiful gate of the Temple :[7] addressing the noble apology in defence of the glorious Name of Jesus to the princes and priests of the people :[8] pronouncing in the instance of Ananias and Saphira a judgment which was so awfully ratified by the hand of God :[9] administering the first public confirmation to the converted nation of the Samaritans :[10] receiving into the Church the first Gentile converts in the case of Cornelius and his family :[11] imprisoned by Herod after the martyrdom of St. James, but miraculously delivered by an Angel :[12] presiding at what was truly the first General Council, the type of the subsequent General Councils, and there in Jerusalem giving forth an infallible dogmatic utterance, which was gladly received and obeyed by the whole Church.[13]

Here, with the affirmation and recognition by all the Churches of St. Peter's supremacy and infallibility, his name ceases to be mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures. We are assured by authorities which it is beside our purpose to cite to-day, that St. Peter first chose Antioch, the chief city in the East, for his See; that city in which the Acts of the Apostles tell us[14] the name of Christians was first given to the disciples of our Blessed Lord. Having ruled that Church for seven years, he transferred his chair to Rome, during the reign of the Emperor Claudian ;[15] and after reigning there for more than twenty-five years, in the year of our Lord 67, in the thirty-fourth year of his Pontificate over the Universal Church, he suffered martyrdom with St. Paul.

St. Paul, the companion of St. Peter in the Festival of to-day, as he was also in the foundership of the Church of Rome, is introduced to us in the Sacred Scriptures under very unpromising circumstances. The first mention of him is as the young man Saul,[16] at whose feet were laid down the garments of those who

[4] John xxi. 15-17. [5] Acts i. [6] Ibid. ii. [7] Ibid. iii.
[8] Ibid. iv. [9] Ibid. v. [10] Ibid. viii. [11] Ibid. x.
[12] Ibid. xii. [13] Ibid. xv. [14] Ibid. xi. 26.
[15] See Butler, Jan. 18. [16] Acts vii. 57.

stoned St. Stephen. He was probably born at about the same time as our Blessed Lord, at Tarsus in Cilicia, and was of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a Pharisee, and was educated under the wise and good Gamaliel. He did not know our Blessed Lord in the flesh, but says that he saw Him once after His Resurrection, and this was when He appeared to him at the time of his conversion. He was a zealous and persecuting opponent of the Christian faith, and pursued its followers even unto death. He knew no better at the time, as he tells his disciple Timothy.[17] After the martyrdom of St. Stephen, which he had abetted, on his way to Damascus in his pursuit of further victims, he was suddenly converted through the prayers, it is well believed, of the holy proto-martyr, who at the time of his death prayed for his persecutors.

After his conversion he remained in Arabia and Damascus for three years, then went up to Jerusalem on a visit to St. Peter, and preached zealously in many countries. He was aggregated to the College of the Apostles, possibly in succession to St. James the proto-martyr of the Twelve, and assumed the name of Paul. After very many labours and sufferings, related by St. Luke his disciple in the Acts of the Apostles, he was imprisoned in Rome, and remained in that state for two years. Here end the acts of his life in the Sacred Scriptures. But it is especially in his inspired Epistles that this glorious Apostle still speaks and lives in the Church. Written to instruct various Churches in the infancy of Christianity, they have for ever been the great storehouse, whence the Church has been able to produce matter for the guidance and the forming of her children in faith, morality, and perfection. On almost every Sunday of the year she selects a portion from that treasury for our instruction and meditation. What this holy Apostle had said of the inspired writings which existed in his days, is eminently true of his own writings: *Whatsoever things have been written, have been written for our learning*.[18] And as the Sacred Scriptures are destined, like the Church which is their guardian, to be perpetually preserved even to the end of time, they will ever be one of the means by which the name of this glorious teacher of the nations will be held in love and veneration.

II. It is the Martyrdom of these two great Apostles, and chief pillars of the Church, that we are celebrating to-day. As they had been called upon to affirm the law of Christ by word and example during their life, so were they also required to witness to the truth by suffering and by death. A martyr signifies a wit-

[17] 1 Tim. i. 13. [18] Rom. xv. 4.

ness ; but it signifies especially one who witnesses to the truth by suffering. Our Blessed Lord made known to all His Apostles, that in calling them to the high dignity of the Apostleship, He was calling them also to Martyrdom. He was to set them the example, and was to be the first Martyr in defence of His own Divinity, and thus was to prove His love for His Church. The good shepherd was to be ready, when called upon, to lay down his life for his sheep ; and of Himself He said : *I am the Good Shepherd, and I lay down My Life for My sheep.*[19] The Apostles were to be able to say the same. They were made shepherds, and were to take heed of the flock committed to them. Their Lord had forewarned them of the opposition they were destined to meet with from the world, and of the persecution which was in store for them : *They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall put you to death ; and you shall be hated by all nations for My Name's sake.*[20] And before this He had said to them : *They will deliver you up in councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues ; and you shall be brought before governors and before kings for My sake, for a witness to them and to the Gentiles.*[21] And just before His Ascension He reminds them of their duty of witnessing to Him : *You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth.*[22]

The two noble witnesses, whose testimony to the faith we are now celebrating, were far from shrinking from making the sacrifice demanded of them. When our Blessed Lord after the Last Supper had assured St. Peter that He had prayed for him, that his faith should never fail, the loving Apostle cried out fervently : *Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death.*[23] This was a profession of love and loyalty which would have to be carried out in due time, and it was a prophetical declaration which was to be fulfilled, not immediately, but when that occasion was to arise, of which our Lord said : *Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow hereafter.*[24] And St. Paul, always desiring to be dissolved and to be with Christ, from Whose love he intrepidly declared that neither tribulation, nor persecution, nor the sword should ever separate him ; who had more than once courted death ; and who had boldly protested to those who wished to deter him from facing dangers that awaited him in Jerusalem, saying : *What do you mean by weeping and afflicting my heart ? For I am ready not only to be bound, but to*

[19] John x. 14. [20] Matt. xxiv. 9. [21] Ibid. x. 17.
[22] Acts i. 8. [23] Luke xxii. 33. [24] John xiii. 36.

die also in Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus,[25]—St. Paul was only too eager to join his fellow-labourer, when he was going off to reap the harvest, for which both of them had been working with such unwearied and constant zeal.

The cruel Emperor Nero had succeeded Claudian at Rome; and he was determined to add to other acts of cruelty that of extirpating Christianity by destroying its chief defenders. St. Peter had been Bishop of Rome for rather more than twenty-five years, having fixed his See there in the year of our Lord 42; and it was now the year of Grace 67. History tells us that Nero, in one of his fits of atrocity, ordered the whole of the city of Rome to be set on fire, in order that he might glut his eyes with the aspect of misery which would be the result.[26] For six days the fire raged, and almost the whole of the city was reduced to ruins. Nero viewed the desolating scene from a neighbouring tower. Reaction and remorse followed; and when the inhuman Emperor found that the citizens could not conceal their resentment against him, whom they knew to have been the author of their misery, he charged the Christians with the crime, condemned them to death indiscriminately, and having ordered the condemnation to be carried into effect in the most savage manner possible, drove through the ruins and witnessed the execution of the victims.

This was the first general persecution, and was one of the supreme efforts of hell to prevail against the Church. SS. Peter and Paul could not abandon Rome in such a crisis. The former was at the time of the outbreak of the persecution engaged in Jerusalem: St. Paul was in Spain. St. Peter hastened back to Rome to comfort and encourage his flock; and when it was found that he was personally to be seized and put to death, he was advised to follow the advice of our Blessed Lord: *When they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another*.[27] He was leaving Rome in submission to what seemed a necessary act of prudence, when our Lord appeared to him, and on St. Peter asking Him: 'Lord, whither goest Thou?' He answered: 'I am going to Rome to be crucified again.'[28] This was a sufficient intimation to the Prince of the Apostles that the time was now come, of which he had been forewarned: *Thou shalt follow Me;* and he immediately returned into the city, was seized, and imprisoned.

Meanwhile St. Paul hurried to Rome; and three reasons influenced him to hasten thither. He wished to go for the encouragement of the poor suffering Christians, to be a companion to St. Peter in a time of unusual anxiety, and also for his own

[25] Acts xxi. 13. [26] See Darras, vol. vi. p. 180. [27] Matt. x. 23.
[28] Domine! quo vadis? St. Ambrose, quoted by Darras, loc. cit. p. 186.

sake, in order that he might gain his crown of martyrdom in the central See of the Church. He had made others die for the faith in Jerusalem, whilst that city was still the chief home of the disciples of our Lord, and he was eager himself to die in the new metropolis of Christianity. Speedily was he also imprisoned in the same Mamertine prison with St. Peter. Even there the Apostles wrought conversions, and were gaining souls. Their chief gaolers, SS. Processus and Martinian, were brought to the faith and baptized, and soon afterwards martyred. Their Festival we shall be commemorating within the next three or four days,[29] on the second of July.

It was on this day, the 29th of June in the year of our Lord 67, that the two glorious Apostles were led out of their prison to seal their testimony with their death. They gave to each other the kiss of peace, spoke affectionate words of encouragement as a farewell,[30] and each was taken off to undergo his punishment. St. Peter was first scourged, and then crucified, with his head downwards, either through his own request, as being unworthy to imitate too closely the mode of death of his Divine Master, or through the orders of his judges, who hereby wished to add ignominy to his punishment. St. Paul was also scourged,[31] and being a Roman citizen was beheaded with the sword, crucifixion not being allowed to be inflicted on one of his privileged class. Loving each other in life, *even in death they were not divided!*[32] And we can imagine how jubilant was their next meeting, when before the throne of God they found themselves united in singing the praises of the Lamb, whose cause and whose Name they had so loyally defended upon earth. It is their joy and glory, commenced on the day of their martyrdom, and continuing in all its freshness still, that the Church places before us to-day, encouraging us by the memory of our fathers in the faith to be true and loyal as they were, and exciting us to ask their intercession for ourselves and the whole Church of Christ.

III. And now, my dear brethren, after considering the history and the glory of these two great Apostles, what remains for us but to learn and to apply the lesson which their lives and actions suggest to us? There is a special lesson we can learn from each of them, and a general lesson which both of them unite in teaching us.

From St. Peter we learn the lesson of faith. It is he who, upon this Festival, preaches to us the duty of loyalty to the Church and to the Holy See, which he founded, and in which he

[29] Brev. Rom. Jul. 2.
[30] Darras, p. 208.
[31] Ibid. p. 211.
[32] 2 Kings i. 23.

is still living and ruling. Our faith must be the faith of Peter, or else it is not that which our Lord taught, and which He is still and for ever teaching from that Chair, which He appointed as the tribunal from which decisive and ultimate declarations are to be uttered and issued to the world. We love to pride ourselves on our faith, and we do well; for it is everything to us. It is the beginning of our justification, and if we stand firm to it, and carry it out in the practice of our lives, it will be the cause of our ultimate triumph and reward. In these days most especially—when the rights of the Holy See of Peter are assailed and encroached upon, when the gates of hell, in their effort to prevail against Almighty God, attack Him in His Church and in His chief Vicar upon earth,—we are called upon, by everything sacred and most dear, to stand up for those rights, and to protest by word and holiness of life against those who, in assailing God's anointed one, are striving to achieve a victory for the world and the devil against the Church, and therefore against God Himself. These are not days in which we ought to compromise our principles, by yielding to the influence of that false and fatal liberalism which St. Peter so nobly condemned, when at the expense of sufferings and death he declared, as his noble successors have declared after him, that it is impossible[33] for them to do otherwise than to speak and act as Almighty God enables them to see and to hear. What unworthy children shall we be of such a father, if we halt and hesitate when such sacred principles are in question!

And from St. Paul we must learn the duty of zeal for the salvation of our neighbours. None of us is to think that we are to be indifferent to what concerns the spiritual good of others. If we truly loved God, we should love the souls which He has made for Himself, and should be anxious as St. Paul was for their salvation. What labours and sufferings did he not undergo for this cause! When to the Corinthians he is obliged, in order to prove the sincerity of his preaching, to relate what he had done for a cause so dear to him, you remember how he enumerates his labours, journeyings, imprisonments, scourgings, perils by sea and land, from robbers, from his own nation, from the Gentiles, and from false brethren, in order that he might be true to the duty imposed upon him of preaching the Gospel and of converting souls. *A necessity lieth upon me*, he says elsewhere; *for woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel. . . To the Jews I became a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; . . to them that were without the law as if I were without the law, that I might gain them that were without the law. . . I became all things to all men, that*

[33] Non possumus, Acts iv. 20.

I might gain all.[34] The solicitude of all the Churches was upon him; he regarded the progress of each as his joy and his crown, and his sympathy ever led him to take upon himself the anxieties and the sorrows also of every one of his brethren. At the time of his conversion, when the zeal which he had until then exhibited in a wrong cause was to be diverted into the direction of the cause of the Church, our Blessed Lord intimated to the disciple Ananias, what was to be the future character of the new convert: *This man is to Me a vessel of election to carry My Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel; for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake.*[35] The Festival of to-day is a record for all generations, how nobly the prophecy has been fulfilled.

If from St. Peter we particularly learn the lesson of faith, and of zeal from St. Paul, so both of them combine in teaching us lessons of love and of fortitude. Ours must be a love with which fortitude is associated; for such was theirs. Their love was such as we are told of in the Canticles: *Love is strong as death;*[36] for both of them rejoiced thus to prove their sincerity, and to lay down their lives for those whom they loved. Why are we so faint-hearted and so easily wearied in our efforts towards perfection? Why do we so easily give up prayer, and are so tepid in our dealing with the Sacraments, and so easily influenced by the maxims and example of the world, when occasions arise in which we ought to assert and defend the principles of religion? It is because we have so little love. When our Lord would commit the chief care of His Church and of souls to St. Peter, He would first satisfy Himself by asking him: *Lovest thou Me?* And when St. Paul wishes to sum up all our duties in one word, he declares that love implies the fulfilment of all;[37] and in an outburst of fervour he exclaims: *If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.*[38] After the example of these two glorious champions of the gospel of love, let us try to increase our love, and we shall not then fear the rebuke of the world, but be glad to be found worthy to suffer something in behalf of a cause for which they laboured and shed their blood.

When we see what Christianity has become, what privileges we are enjoying as children of the Church, through what labours and trials this Church has had to pass, and to what persecution even now she is being constantly exposed, and which she bears so bravely, we look back to these noble Apostles, and rejoice to find that their spirit is still alive and active. Now in the days of

[34] 1 Cor. ix. 16, &c. [35] Acts ix. 15. [36] Cant. viii. 6.
[37] Rom. xiii. 10. [38] 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

our holy jubilarian Pope, who has been spared even beyond St. Peter's years in Rome, and who is setting such an example of faith, zeal, love, and fortitude, we are especially drawn towards the Chair which St. Peter founded, and in which a martyr successor is now seated. May the two Princes of the Church whose names we venerate to-day ever look down with a protecting love upon pastors and people: blessing us, and encouraging us by their words and example to be loyal and loving children of the Church of God, that with them we may become inheritors hereafter of the kingdom of Heaven!

SERMON XLIV.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF SS. PETER AND PAUL.

INFALLIBLE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SEE.

I say to thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

THERE is a doctrine of the Catholic Church which the circumstances of these later times have made unusually prominent, and to which, in connexion with the Festival of SS. Peter and Paul, it is not inexpedient to direct attention: and this is the doctrine of the Infallibility of the Holy See of St. Peter. This doctrine formed a part of the deposit entrusted to the care of the Church at the time of her foundation; and, like the householder who takes out from his treasury new things and old, the Church has thought it well to bring it forth from her treasury, in order to assert with additional emphasis principles of divine faith, in days in which there is a special call for such an assertion. The holy Council of the Vatican has defined that this is a dogma of Faith, and as the Church always wishes her children to be instructed in every dogma, we must strive clearly to understand what she proposes on this question. The holy Apostle St. Peter, to whom were given the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, has not been unequal to the duty imposed on him. When our Blessed Lord chose him for the office of the chief guardian of the Faith, He fitted him for that office by giving him the necessary qualifications, and one of them was that which we are to consider to-day: infallibility, or a perfect security against error, in defining what is to be believed and practised by every member of the Church.

As it is a doctrinal matter upon which I am instructing you to-day, it will be necessary to explain clearly the terms which we use. And if I lay the doctrine before you with its proofs and its reasons, you will understand, my dear brethren, that it is not that I doubt your acceptance of this article of your faith; but it is in order that you may be the more fully enlightened, and may be the better able to give to others a reason for what you believe.

As a necessary step towards understanding what is especially meant by the Infallibility of the Holy See, or of the Pope, as it is otherwise called, we must master the truth of the Infallibility of the Church, from which that of the Pope will be found to follow, as an implied and essential consequence.

I. Infallibility means an inability to err. When we say that God is infallible, we mean that He cannot err; because to suppose Him capable of doing so, would be to deny that He is the sovereign Wisdom and the sovereign Truth. Thus we say in our act of Faith, that He can neither deceive nor be deceived. His infallibility is necessary and eternal: it proceeds from His nature and His essential attributes. When we say that the Church is infallible, we mean also that the Church cannot err. But to the Church, Infallibility is an infused and communicated gift. The Church is infallible, because God has made her so. He has infused into her His own Spirit, who lives in her and acts through her; and it is because of the presence of this Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, in the Church, that she does not and cannot err in her teaching. To suppose that the Church could err in her decisions and declarations upon faith and morals, would be imputing the possibility of error to the Divine Spirit, that is to say to God Himself, who dwells and acts within her. Therefore the infallibility of the Church depends upon the infallibility of God: she is infallible, because He is so.

This is a high claim, it may be said, which we make for the Church; but high as it is, you know that we always assert it without hesitation or obscurity. It is a claim which we are not at liberty to waive, because it concerns Almighty God Himself. If He speaks through the Church, He by that fact makes the Church what she is, in appointing her to announce His truths and His messages to mankind. Moreover, any claim less than this would be an acknowledgment upon our part against God. It would imply upon His part either a want of power, or a want of will. And what is man, that he should dare to limit what God can do, or to define what He wills to do? When He sent prophets to announce His messages, He showed Himself to be both willing and able to inspire them with wisdom and truthfulness. And if the Church has been appointed to teach and to minister, the same Holy Spirit, 'who spoke through the Prophets,' can speak through her, and can guide her in the execution of her office. If God, then, could not send a prophet who would declare what was false, He cannot found a Church, and appoint it to teach, without securing it against error. The high claim, therefore, which we make for the Church founded by Jesus Christ is expressly this: it

is, and it must be, infallible. Here we are not limiting God's power. To suppose that He can teach error, is not giving Him an attribute ; it is depriving Him of the attribute of necessary truthfulness.

We need not go beyond the clear declarations of the New Testament for evidence of the infallible authority of the Church ; and these declarations affirm that the Catholic Church *was* infallible at her foundation, that she *is* infallible now, and that she *will be* so for ever. What our Divine Lord did in founding His Church was this. He aggregated to Himself twelve companions, whom He called Apostles, whom He raised to a position superior to the rest of men, and whom He invested also with powers peculiar to themselves. He limited His own labours to Judæa ; and during His three years of ministerial work, admitted but few followers, as we see from the large and rapid increase recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. But it was far from being His will that His religion should be limited to Judæa. He not only declared His will, but gave His solemn orders to His Apostles that they should, when He left them to return to His Father, go to every nation, and preach the faith to every creature. And that they might succeed, He gave them a plenitude of power, like to His own, and to last for ever. The Apostles accepted their commission, exercised the high power given to them, transmitted it to those who came after them, and through this transmission it still exists, and is guaranteed to exist for ever.

This is the conclusion which must be drawn from inspired words, of which I will briefly remind you. I need not and shall not comment upon them ; because I am not preaching on the Infallibility of the Church ; but only assuming that fact as preliminary to the question of the Infallibility of the Pope. To the Apostles, our Blessed Lord said on one occasion : *He that heareth you, heareth Me ; and He that despiseth you, despiseth Me.*[1] He also said to them : *I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain.*[2] And He gives them this charge : *Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved : he that believeth not shall be condemned.*[3] And again : *All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.*[4] And that the power given was intended to be perpetual,

[1] Luke x. 16.
[2] John xv. 16.
[3] Mark xvi. 15, 16.
[4] Matt. xxviii. 18, 20.

follows from other words: *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of Truth. He will teach you all things, and bring to your mind all things whatsoever I shall have said to you.*[5] These are Gospel statements, and all of them are our Divine Lord's own words. That they were realised is shown by the facts recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and by the testimony of the inspired Epistles. St. Paul's testimony is especially valuable, because he was not one of the original Twelve, but was aggregated to the Apostolical College at a subsequent period. Of this Divine authority in the Church he says to his favourite Thessalonians: *We give thanks to God without ceasing, that when you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of man, but, as it is indeed, the word of God.*[6] And speaking of certain regulations which he had made, he says elsewhere to them: *He that despiseth these things, despiseth not man but God.*[7] To the elders of the clergy of Ephesus he addresses himself personally, and says to them: *Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops to rule the Church of God.*[8] In the same spirit he writes to the Hebrews: *Remember your prelates who have spoken the word of God to you: whose faith follow.*[9] And to Timothy he speaks of the Church, and calls it *the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*[10]

These declarations assure us that the Church was invested with Infallibility by its Divine Founder, and that the gift then bestowed was intended to be perpetual. The work of converting nations and preaching the Gospel to every creature is still going on. The Church still continues to be God's witness in an unbelieving world: it is an evidence of His presence and His truth still abiding upon earth. If the Church is not at this present time infallible, the Holy Ghost is not within her; and our Lord's words would not be true, which declare that He is to abide with her for ever. But if the Holy Ghost is within her, as He is and must be, she cannot err, and therefore she is infallible.—Now we have to see how the Infallibility of the Church necessarily implies the Infallibility of the Pope, as being the Head of the Church.

II. When our Lord founded and formed His Church, He constituted it as one body, having many members, but all under one Head. He Himself was that Head. *I am the vine*, He says to His Apostles, *you are the branches.*[11] And St. Paul, speaking about the unity of the Church, repeatedly calls it a body consisting of many

[5] John xiv. 16.
[6] 1 Thess. ii. 13.
[7] Ibid. iv. 8.
[8] Acts xx. 28.
[9] Heb. xiii. 7.
[10] 1 Tim. iii. 15.
[11] John xv. 5.

members, but yet only one reality: *For as in one body we have many members, . . . so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*[12] And he says to the Ephesians that *Christ is the Head of the Church*, and that the Church is thus subject to Him.[13] This body, subject to its head, He intended to be perpetual, inasmuch as we have seen that Himself and the Spirit of Truth were to remain with it for ever, even to the consummation of the world. And He intended it to be a visible body, the light of the world, and to have that notable mark of Unity, by which the world was to recognise it as having come from God. What He did was this. He appointed one of the Apostles, Peter, to be His visible representative after His Ascension. For there are undoubtedly declarations regarding this Apostle, which assign to him an exceptional position and one of preëminence over the rest. In every list of the Apostles he is named the first: to him is given a special name signifying a rock or chief foundation: upon him the Church is declared to be built, and to him are given especially the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: he receives a triple charge to feed the whole flock of Christ: for him a special prayer is offered up that his faith should never fail: he is found in the Acts of the Apostles to be the leader on all public occasions of the Apostolical body; and thus his supremacy is affirmed in the Sacred Scripture. It is not, however, the Supremacy which we are now considering, any more than the Infallibility of the Church. But from both of these facts, the Infallibility of the Church and the Supremacy of St. Peter in himself and his successors, follows the special gift which we *are* considering, namely, the Infallibility of the Sovereign Pontiff, as now defined by the Vatican Council.

This holy Council, my dear brethren, in its dogmatic definition of this doctrine,[14] cites especially three passages from the Holy Gospel, in which our Lord implies, in words addressed to Peter, the gift of perpetual Infallibility. The first is the address made to this Apostle, after he had, in the name of the Apostles, declared the Divinity of our Lord. *I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And to thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven.*[15] Observe that this is the first mention made of the Church in the New Testament; and you cannot help seeing also how the existence of the Church is

[12] Rom. xii. 4, 5.
[13] Eph. v. 23.
[14] The Constitution 'Pastor Æternus.'
[15] Matt. xvi. 18, 19.

here identified with the continued existence of Peter. The foundation cannot fail, and yet the superstructure remain firm. If the Church, then, is to be considered as always firm in the faith, the foundation on which it is built must also be firm and lasting. And, indeed, the reason given by our Lord why the gates of hell shall never prevail against the Church is because it is built upon the rock, Peter. The firmness of the foundation is stated as the reason for the perpetual existence of the Church. Let the foundation be weak and give way, where is there any security in the building? The Church is the building, Peter is the foundation: *upon this rock I will build My Church:* and the faith of the Church is perpetual, because Peter's is so. If it were supposed that the Pope, that is to say, Peter himself in his successor, were to err in faith, either the Church would err with him or would not. If it erred with him, it would not be infallible: if it did not err, it would be separated from the foundation on which Christ has built it, and it would cease to be His Church, because, He says, on Peter I will build *My* Church; and therefore the personal Infallibility of the Pope necessarily follows from the Infallibility of the Church, and from the connexion between the foundation and that which is built upon it.

Another saying of our Divine Lord is cited by the Vatican Council, and it is what He addresses suddenly and abruptly to Peter in His discourse at the last supper, as recorded by St. Luke: *And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren.*[16] When our Lord here expresses His anxiety and desire that the faith of Peter should not fail, He declares that He wishes him to be infallible, and that He has prayed that he may be so. He who says elsewhere of His Church, *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, that He may abide with you for ever*, here says that He has prayed for the perpetuity of the faith of Peter. His prayer for the sending of the Holy Spirit was granted, and the Church is infallible: His prayer for Peter cannot have been inefficacious. He foretels that it is to be granted, and that the consequence will be that the faith of his brethren is to be supported by him. St. Paul tells us that when our Blessed Lord *in the days of His flesh prayed, . . He was heard for His reverence*;[17] and therefore we cannot doubt that what was asked for here, namely, Peter's perpetual infallibility, was accorded to the Divine Son by His Eternal Father. It is to be observed how our dear Lord passes

[16] Luke xxii. 31, 32. [17] Heb. v. 7.

in the words addressed to Peter from the plural to the singular. When He speaks about the assaults of Satan, He speaks of these as directed against all, in the plural: *Satan hath desired to have you.* When He speaks of the one whose faith was never to fail, He turns to the singular: *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not;* and thus associates infallibility personally with Peter.

The third declaration of our Blessed Lord brought forward by the Council is the triple pastoral charge given to St. Peter after the Resurrection. *Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith to Him: Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him: Feed My lambs. He saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? He saith to Him: Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him: Feed My lambs. He said to him the third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? . . He said to Him: Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He said to him: Feed My sheep.*[18] The universal pastoral power, which is here so solemnly bestowed upon Peter, who had been now converted and was to confirm his brethren, implies, as the Vatican Council, quoting the Council of Florence, assures us, an authority to teach the whole Church, and to be the Pastor of pastors. If he teaches error, the whole Church is affected, and either believes what he teaches or differs from him. If it believes error, it is performing an act incompatible with the presence within it of the Holy Spirit of Truth, who is its security against the admission of error. If it differs from him, then it is not fed by him: it refuses to submit to a pastorate instituted by Christ, and all its children are like sheep gone astray, and the separation from Peter is the sacrifice of unity. Therefore, again, the personal infallibility of St. Peter is guaranteed for ever.

If, then, the Church is infallible, and if St. Peter is the perpetual Head of the Church, the Pope as Head of an infallible Church is, and must be, personally infallible. To believe anything contradictory to this would be to deny the two elementary Catholic truths of the Infallibility of the Church, and the Supremacy of the Holy See. From these two essential truths, which we must admit if we pretend to be Catholics, follows the truth now under consideration, and now happily defined for us, that the Sovereign Pontiff, when he decides judicially and authoritatively any question in faith or morals, cannot err, that his judgment is final and definitive, and therefore that he is personally infallible. That this doctrine has been recently defined does not make it a new doctrine. The definition decides that it is an old

[18] John xxi. 15-17.

truth, delivered by our Blessed Lord, always held in the deposit committed to the Church, and now produced from that deposit; not newly discovered, but always known to be in the keeping of the Church, and now declared with an openness and decisiveness which leave no room for theoretical discussion, and which close all doubt in the minds of faithful and obedient children of the Church.

There are innumerable facts in the history of the Church, and constant declarations of the holy fathers, which assure us how this doctrine has always been practically followed in the Church. The necessity of agreement in doctrine with Rome, which has uniformly been applied as a test of orthodoxy: the condemnation of heresy by the Holy See: the admission that the decision of the Sovereign Pontiff puts a close to every discussion on questions of doctrine: frequent appeals in matters of controversy made to Rome: the fact of the consent and approval of the Bishop of Rome being required before the decrees of a General Council even could be enforced: the hatred of heretics directed so uniformly against the Holy See; for *what fellowship hath light with darkness?*[19] asks St. Paul:—these are amongst the facts and testimonies which age after age has supplied in behalf of this glorious privilege of the successors of St. Peter.

These principles, my dear brethren, which I have affirmed for you, will suffice (for in a short instruction we cannot say more) to enlighten and to strengthen you in your loyal adhesion to this doctrine. Right reason will convince all who believe in the Infallible Authority of the Church, to admit the Infallibility of the Pope as Head of the Church. There is a necessary bond of unity which keeps the Church together as one indivisible body. As the body and the head in a human creature cannot be separated, and yet life continue to exist, so in the Church the Head cannot be severed from the body which it guides and rules, and of which it is the constituted exponent. There is a saying of St. Paul's which we may well apply as illustrative of the necessary infallibility of him who is the Head of an infallible Church: *with the heart we believe unto justice, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*[20] In every truthful person the mouth always speaks what the heart believes. The mouth is in the head, and thus the head declares what the person knows and feels. And so the Church cannot believe one thing, and its Head declare another; otherwise it would be the Church which errs, being necessarily united, as forming one living whole, with the Head which speaks the sentiment of the heart. To suppose,

[19] 2 Cor. vi. 15. [20] Rom. x. 10.

therefore, that the Pope should ever teach otherwise than as the Church believes, is an impossible supposition: as impossible as that the head should continue to think and speak when severed from the body.

Loyal and faithful members of the Church, and children of the glorious Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, as we hope we are, and trust we shall ever continue to be, we have duties in respect to this doctrine of the Infallibility of the Sovereign Pontiff which we must consistently and zealously fulfil. We must believe it, for it has been duly proposed to us; and we always declare in our acts of faith, that we believe everything which the Church proposes to us as revealed by God. We must give our sincere and hearty adhesion to it; for to hold back in the least degree, implies a doubtfulness which is utterly inconsistent with the certainty of faith. We must not question its expediency, for it is not our place to judge the Church, but to submit fully and unreservedly to her every judgment. We must defend the doctrine as zealously as we should defend the Divinity of our Lord, for which SS. Peter and Paul did not hesitate to shed their blood; because one article of faith is as true as another. And we must be especially on our guard against giving in, in the slightest degree, to that false and dishonourable liberalism which seems willing to make a compromise with the world, at the expense of God and His Anointed One.

In the matter of your duty upon this point, there are three in question: yourself, the Church, and the Head of the Church. You yourself are deeply concerned; for your soul, your eternity, depends upon your faith, and your faith is here called into practice. The Church, your mother, is concerned, for it is she who has proposed this truth to you, and demands your submission and your acceptance. Do not think that you are defending her privileges, when you diminish the glory which crowns her Head. And this Head is concerned. It is your own Father's honour that is in question, and therefore your own also. Honour thy Father and thy Mother, is a commandment which is here enforced. Do not break it; but that you may be long-lived, not upon earth, but in the Church Triumphant, give to both a prompt, constant, and cheerful sign of your confidence, your obedience, and your love.

NOTE. At this time, on the first Sunday in July, occurs the Festival of the MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD. The subject is treated in the Sermon for Passion Sunday, p. 196.

SERMON XLV.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE COMPASSION OF GOD.

I have compassion on the multitude.

THE tender and affectionate words spoken by our dearest Lord in the Gospel of to-day, expressing the motive which moved Him to perform the miracle therein recorded, serve very effectually to describe the whole character of His dealings with us; and they cannot fail to move us towards Him, by the most encouraging feelings of confidence and love. The fact of His having uttered the words may account for what is in itself so wonderful: a great crowd, not a few individuals, but a great crowd following Him into the desert, and remaining with Him not for a few hours, but for three whole days: passing the night close about Him, and longing for the day, that they might once again look upon His Face, and listen to the beautiful lessons which He was always teaching them, of meekness, humility, charity, and confidence in God. What if they hungered? They knew that He had fasted forty days in the same desert in which they were fasting but three. And what if they were unsheltered and homeless? They had already heard His loving lessons of a trust in Providence, and were willing to share with the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, in a protection that was common to all. They had learnt from the prophetical Psalms of David, that He who had proved Himself to be their Saviour, was a *compassionate and merciful Lord, giving food to those who feared Him*;[1] and it never crossed their mind to ask the doubting question of those who had spoken ill of God and tempted Him, saying: *Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?*[2] They had the fullest confidence in Him: He had the most tender compassion for them; and so they continued to cling to Him, and He to sustain them, whilst day after day passed unheededly along.

The words, then, of our Blessed Lord: *I have compassion on*

[1] Ps. cx. 4. [2] Ibid. lxxvii. 19.

the multitude, expressed not a passing but an habitual constant feeling. They express, indeed, the whole spirit of the Gospel, and declare the nature of all God's dealings towards man, in whose regard our good and loving God is for ever manifesting His Compassion.

I. What do we mean by Compassion, especially as exercised by Almighty God? Compassion really means a sharing in the suffering of another. It implies the taking upon ourselves some of the pain and sorrow of one in affliction, and the diminishing, or the desire to diminish, that pain in another, in the proportion in which we are able to take it upon ourselves. The teaching of St. Paul, when he says: *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ*,[3] exactly expresses what is meant by Compassion. If we see a man toiling along under the pressure of a heavy burden, and we go up to him, take off some of the weight and carry it ourselves, we are relieving him, just in the proportion in which we are willing or able to load ourselves. And when St. Paul so nobly exclaims, after speaking amongst his other sufferings of his solicitude for all the Churches: *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?*[4] he declares how he was moved by sympathy and fellow-suffering in every case that was brought before him.

To us, therefore, Compassion implies pain as well as comfort. It implies pain, if we are sincere, and if our sympathy exists elsewhere except on our lips. If our heart really feels for another, it is pained, and we are moved, it may oftentimes be, even to tears: we do what St. Paul says we ought in our charity for others to do, *weep with those that weep*.[5] But it implies comfort also, because we feel that we are satisfying an instinct of a generous nature; and the same reason that makes us grieve for the sorrows of another, causes relief to ourself in proportion as we feel that we are administering comfort to a brother. Your own experience must oftentimes have convinced you of this double feeling which has attended your deeds of compassion.

You see a poor man, in the midst of privations and affliction. You cannot help *being moved with compassion*, as was the good Samaritan at the sight of the wounded man whom he came across upon his journey. You afford him relief by words of kindness and by ministering to his wants, and your own good Angel at that time seems to whisper his approval, and you feel joy in the act of mercy you have performed. You see a sick man; and whilst you submit to whatever pain or inconvenience your visits to him may occasion, you are rewarded in some degree for the

[3] Gal. vi. 2. [4] 2 Cor. xi. 29. [5] Rom. xii. 15.

work you have done, in the conviction that you have soothed and relieved a brother on his bed of suffering. Understand me, my brethren, I am not stating what is the highest motive which is to influence you in such deeds. That is not my purpose now:[6] I am but explaining what is meant by Compassion, when we say that it is a sharing in the sufferings of another.

What did our dear Lord do when He went to show Compassion to the sisters Martha and Mary, upon the death of their brother Lazarus? He goes to visit them; and *Mary, seeing Him, fell down at His feet, and saith to Him: O Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died. Jesus, therefore, when He saw her weeping, groaned in spirit and was troubled, and said: Where have you laid him? They say to Him: Lord, come and see. And Jesus wept. The Jews, therefore, said: Behold how He loved him.*[7] And St. Paul, who is always expressing his feelings of sympathy with his brethren, who was willing to undergo any pain on their behalf, even to be anathematised,[8] if such an outward punishment could benefit them, expresses himself so affectionately and so pathetically in his beautiful little letter to Philemon. The object of his compassion, the one whose suffering he takes upon himself, for whom he pleads so earnestly, whom he calls a most dear brother, is a runaway slave, who had robbed his master, Philemon, and had escaped to Rome, where the Apostle converts him to the faith. He, upon whom the solicitude of all the Churches was pressing, who was then labouring under sorrows of his own, for he was in prison, yet for the time seems to forget everything else but the sorrow and shame of that poor slave, and writes to supplicate his pardon. *An old man and a prisoner*, he says, *I beseech thee for my son, Onesimus, . . receive him as my own bowels, . . not now as a slave, but as a most dear brother especially to me; . . receive him as myself, and if he hath wronged thee in anything, put that to my account—I will repay it.*

II. This is what is meant by Compassion. And although when we speak of God's compassion, we cannot mean precisely and strictly the same, for God is not, as man, subject to human infirmities and passions, yet it pleases Him to make known to us in words and in deeds, that He deserves the beautiful name which St. Paul gives to Him when he says of Him: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation.*[9] God does not actually suffer as man, but He speaks and acts as

[6] See for further matter, the Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, p. 115, &c.

[7] John xi. 32-36. [8] Rom. ix. 3. [9] 2 Cor. i. 3.

if He did so. From His high throne in Heaven, He looks down with pity and with love upon His poor suffering creatures upon earth, and in all His dealings with them He is showing His Compassion.

Take, for instance, His act of creation, that act by which He first brought us into existence. Before we ourselves, or any other of God's creatures existed, He knew and saw not only what glory could be given to Himself by the act of creation, but also the good and the happiness which existence would bring to us. Even then, looking upon all things lying in the helpless state of possibility only, but craving to be called forth into reality, He said: *I have compassion on the multitude;* and ordering them to come forth from their nothingness, He clothed them with the beauty which creation presents. To this act of Compassion upon His part He refers, when He is rebuking the people of Israel for their forgetfulness of all that they owed to Him in return for this sign of His pity and goodness towards them: *Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee.*[10] And of the joy of the creature in accepting this proof of Compassion, Baruch beautifully tells us: *The stars have given light in their watches, and rejoiced: they were called and they said: Here we are: and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to Him that made them.*[11] Well therefore are all creatures called upon to join in their adoration and praise of Him, Who is the common Creator of all; and well is man especially called upon to be the spokesman of all visible creation, in proclaiming what is due to Him, Who hath made all things in wisdom and in goodness. *All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord, praise and exalt Him above all for ever.*[12]

And in His Providence, in that act by which He preserves in existence and watches over each of the creatures of His hands, He is ever looking down upon them, and saying: *I have compassion on the multitude.* It is to His Compassion that the Prophet Jeremias in his Lamentations refers, as the reason why we still continue to exist, and do not fall back again into the nothing whence He drew us forth: *The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed: because His commiserations have not failed.*[13] And in some of those beautiful addresses of our dear Lord which drew the multitudes about Him, and made them pass days and nights in His sacred presence, He used to tell them of their duty of trusting with an undoubted confidence in the love of that Providence, upon which they were to throw all their care: *I say to you,*

[10] Jer. xxxi. 3.
[11] Bar. iii. 34, 35.
[12] Dan. iii. 57.
[13] Lam. iii. 22.

be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on.[14] He points to the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, in all the beauty with which they were invested by Him who had created them, as examples for men to follow, with a loving trust in such a compassionate God.

But it is most especially in that Mystery, in which *hath appeared the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour*, that Compassion in its fullest and strictest meaning, a sharing in our sufferings and an affording relief in them, has been manifested by Almighty God: the Mystery of the Incarnation. Here it is that God Himself hath devised the means of suffering for us and with us. For, what saith the Prophet: *Surely He hath borne our infirmities and hath carried our sorrows: He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed.*[15] Has the world ever seen, or can it ever see, such a sign of Compassion as that which our most merciful Saviour has given to us in the work of our Redemption? What a view presented itself to the Only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father, when He looked down from Heaven, and saw poor suffering man under the curse of God, and destined, through sin, to eternal separation! Turning to His Father, and offering Himself in sacrifice in order to atone for the injury done to His Glory, He says: *I have compassion on the multitude.* Behold, I come to do Thy will, and to save Thy children. Fit a body for Me, in which I can make Myself a Victim, so can I but advance Thy Glory, and save Thy people. And you know, my dear brethren, how the offering was accepted, and how, when the fulness of time was come, God, who so loved the world as to give His only Son for its redemption, sent Him to do His Will, and to show compassion to poor suffering men.

Did He disappoint His Father, and has He disappointed us? Go through the whole of His Life, examine the motive of each act, the spirit of each word, the reason of each miracle, and you will find that Compassion inspires them all. In Bethlehem, if He is born poor and an outcast: if He is quickly hurried off into Egypt as an exile: if He is in want and in labours all through the time of His youth: if He spends afterwards, in His Missionary Life, days and nights of incessant toil and prayer—was not all this done to show how truly He compassionated our infirmities, and how determined He was to administer relief? See Him going about so actively and so anxiously, calling upon all to come to Him: *Come to Me, all you that labour and are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you.*[16] He points to His acts of

[14] Matt. vi. 25. [15] Is. liii. 4, 5. [16] Matt. xi. 28.

Compassion as proofs of the Divinity of His Mission : *Go and tell John what you have seen and heard : the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them.*[17] Nor did He hesitate, when love and Compassion demanded it, to do what He said the Good Shepherd would not refuse to do, lay down His Life for His sheep. When, therefore, in to-day's Gospel He expresses His Compassion, truly it is not a solitary but an habitual feeling which He expresses.

Again : in all His dealings with us in the spiritual kingdom, is not Almighty God looking down upon our souls, and saying : *I have compassion on the multitude ?* How does He convert a sinner ? He sees one that is disobedient, ungrateful, rebellious : but does He at once take vengeance ? His declaration is : *I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live.*[18] And as He stands, like the father of the Prodigal, ever expecting that His invitation to return will be received, He protests how ready is His forgiveness, when He charges the sinner, saying : *Come and accuse Me, saith the Lord : if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow : and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool.*[19] When did the world ever show compassion like this : that the offended one is the first to invite and to press for reconciliation and a renewal of friendship ? Yet this is what our merciful God is always doing.

And what is Grace, which produces such wonderful effects in purifying our souls, and in drawing us to a close union with God ? It is God's free gift to the soul : given, not on a claim of justice, but in love and compassion. It is His bending down to a creature, and pressing it to Himself : His presence with a soul in tribulation and struggle, and His reward to a soul after the victory which He Himself has so mercifully enabled it to achieve. And the Sacraments, those wonderful channels of Divine Grace, the Saviour's fountains from which we are bidden to go and drink in joy, the inventions of His Love and the institutions of His Wisdom and Power : what are they but surprising manifestations of His Compassion ? In these He is showing His attendance upon a soul in every phase and feature of life. It is here that He first makes a soul a fitting subject for Heaven : that He hems it in with defences against every kind of danger and assault : that He becomes Himself its food and support : that, in case of a separation from Him by actual sin, He restores the soul to His friendship, and bestows pardon : that at the trying time

[17] Matt. xi. 5. [18] Ezech. xxxiii. 11. [19] Is. i. 18.

which precedes death, He administers special comfort and help, when compassion is so much needed. Assuredly He that has instituted all these sources of blessing and grace, and who is ever presiding over their application to each individual soul, is a compassionate God; and of Him St. Paul has indeed said well, when he tells us, that *we have not a High Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities;* and that to Him *we must go with confidence, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid.*[20]

In the system of Prayer, too, what else is our good God doing, but showing Compassion to the multitude, whom He commands to turn to Him for certain help in every want and sorrow: to go to Him as to 'Our Father,' who knows how to *give good things to those that ask Him?*[21] And in the protection of Saints and Angels what love and pity are manifested, when the same who minister to His Glory in Heaven, are deputed by God to watch over and bear up tenderly His children upon earth! Even in Purgatory, to those holy but afflicted souls, separated for a time from the full possession of Himself which is secured for them in the future, with what compassion is the God of Mercy ever looking towards those objects of His Love, moving us to pray for them, and to appeal in their behalf to Him, with whom *there is mercy and plentiful redemption!*[22] There is indeed no other nation which has its gods so close to it as our God is to us!

III. It now rests with us to ask and to have an answer to an important question. What are the duties which bind us, because of God's Compassion? First, and most directly, follow duties which we owe to God. These are thanksgiving for His past mercies. How many and how great have they not been! Creation, Providence, Redemption, Grace, the Sacraments, Prayer, the Protection of Saints and Angels, which we have been reciting as manifestations of His Compassion! all these have been exercised in our regard. What are we to return to the Lord for all that He has bestowed upon us? However worthless we may consider our acts of praise, yet it is our duty to exert ourselves in praising and thanking Him, whom we acknowledge, in His infinite Mercy, to be to us the source of all blessings. We owe Him also confidence both in the present and for the future. How can we doubt such a God? He tells us to try whether He is not sincere in His offers of Compassion, and submits to be accused by us if He should ever be less loving to us than a mother to her child. *Why are you solicitous, O ye of little faith?* We cannot know our God, if we ever think of mistrusting Him. *I*

[20] Heb. iv. 15, 16. [21] Matt. vii. 11. [22] Ps. De Profundis.

know whom I have trusted, and I am certain,[23] was the motto of the generous St. Paul. Truly may God's Compassion towards us encourage us to make it our motto also.

And towards ourselves the Compassion of God suggests duties which we must not omit. We must be earnest in our coöperation with Him who is always helping us. No indolence, no tepidity, no shortcomings or half-measures ought to be tolerated upon our part, when we remember how we are and have been objects of love and pity on the part of a God, who has never been wearied in our regard. We ought to take pity upon our own souls, and not injure what God has so actively befriended. We must avoid sin, which makes us unworthy of God's mercy, and especially obstinacy in sin, the ordinary prelude to final impenitence, which of its very nature excludes mercy. Contrition upon our part will immediately find Compassion upon His; for a contrite and humble heart He will not and cannot despise.

Towards others, also, God's Compassion in our regard must suggest duties which we cannot refuse, unless we declare ourselves to be ungrateful and unworthy children of such a Father. It is our dear Lord's own argument, you know. We are forcing God to act against His system of Compassion: to recall His pardon, and to cast us off, if we reject the appeals of our neighbour, and refuse forgiveness to an offending brother: *So will My Heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from his heart.*[24] To study the character of God, and to imitate it, is the high privilege and ambition of a Christian. Each of our neighbours is an object of God's compassion: and so we are working hand and heart with God, when we make him to be an object of ours also.

Who, then, will refuse among the Attributes of God, to give a prominent place to His Compassion? Who will refuse to throw himself with the fullest confidence into the arms of such a God? We want the spirit and loving heart of the Psalmist, to enable us to acknowledge all that this Attribute claims from us. Both here and hereafter, if we have the happiness of being saved, everything must be admitted to be due to this Perfection of a God infinite in all Perfections. *He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob. He shall say to the Lord: Thou art my Protector and my Refuge: my God, in Him will I trust. No evil shall come to thee: nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling. For He hath given His Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. In*

[23] 2 Tim. i, 12. [24] Matt. xviii. 35.

their hands shall they bear thee up: lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Because he hath hoped in Me, I will deliver him: I will protect him because he hath known My Name. He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him: I am with him in tribulation. I will deliver him, and I will glorify him. I will fill him with length of days, and I will show him My salvation.[25] Such once was, and such ever may be, the dialogue which passes between a compassionate God and a confiding soul.

[25] Ps. xc.

SERMON XLVI.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE EVIDENCE OF WORKS.

By their fruits you shall know them.

THERE is one fact regarding the Christian faith which never can be called in question ; and that is, that it is an eminently practical faith. It is intended to tell upon the whole of our life, to lay down principles and to dictate motives of conduct, to establish a supervision, and erect a tribunal for judging all our actions. Christianity is a law, and has the sanction of a law. Its Lawgiver is also our Judge, and will certainly one day demand an account of the manner in which we have fulfilled the law which He has laid down for us. Our dear Lord certainly intended this, and in proof of it we point to the words of the Gospel of this Sunday. The Church also intends that we should always remember and act up to this practical truth ; and hence she manifests her solicitude in its regard, and reminds us of the authority with which she is invested, to proclaim and enforce the law of her Founder. We cannot ourselves be ignorant of the law imposed upon us ; for in substance each one's conscience declares its obligation. The world knows the fact ; and hence its active opposition to the Church, and its attempt to enforce everywhere its own maxims, and to substitute them in place of the Gospel. There is no doubt, therefore, that the Christian faith is a practical faith.

I. However evident this truth is, it is necessary frequently to urge its recollection, inasmuch as it is not sufficiently borne in mind. Many persons seem to think that because they happen to be Catholics, that is quite enough. And so it would be, if they were only Catholics, in practice as well as in profession. To be a Catholic in its real sense means to live as a Catholic : to practise the spiritual duties of a Catholic ; and to be in heart and soul, and in active obedience to the precepts of the Church, what a Catholic ought to be. This is what is impressed upon us by the concluding words of to-day's Gospel : *Not every one that saith,*

Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven. How often do we unfortunately find it the case, that Catholics look down upon those who have not had the same blessing as themselves of a call to the faith: that they court controversy, and taunt others with impiety because they do not outwardly profess the Catholic religion: that they think themselves, therefore, superior to those others, and almost go as far as the proud Pharisee in thanking God that they are not like the rest of men, but are members of the One Holy Catholic Church!

Yet if the life and habits of such professors of the faith were looked into, it would be found, in the case of most of them, that their practice is very different from what a Catholic's ought to be. It is not their words, but their works, which bear the truest and the only valuable testimony of what they are. What can it avail them to boast of what seems to them a privilege and a glory, if the one test by which God judges, the test of active obedience to the duties of religion, be wanting? Will their faith alone save them? They have not faith, if they think it will; for to believe that faith alone, without good works, can save us, is to be without that faith which alone can save us: *a faith working by charity in Jesus Christ.*[1] Not by empty promise and protests, but *by their fruits you shall know them.*

The fruits of a Christian are his works, and by them he is to be known. Words may deceive: but works do not. The question is now, and the great question at some future day will be: Are these works what they ought to be? What our Divine Lord lays down as a truth in the Gospel of to-day will be found, upon consideration, to be universally true; and we shall see, therefore, what an universal principle they are breaking through, who pretend to satisfy themselves by any other evidence as to what they really are.

Every being that exists shows what its nature is by its works. Even Almighty God Himself obeys this law and acts upon it; for it is by His works that He vouchsafes to let us know Who and what He is. What our Blessed Lord said of Himself in His sacred Humanity, is true of the Divinity: *the works which I do, give testimony of Me.*[2] It is true of the secret inward Life of God, and it is true of His outward acts. In God there are the inward operations, which from all eternity have been going on in the ever-blessed Trinity: the operations of knowledge and of love, by which the Son proceeds from the Father, and the Holy

[1] Gal. v. 6. [2] John v. 36.

Ghost from the Father and the Son. Thus the works of God are an evidence of the truth of the Mystery of the Trinity, as the beloved disciple says: *there are Three who give testimony in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these Three are One.*[3]

And in His outward works Almighty God is bearing testimony of what He is, and bringing home to every man the knowledge of Himself. Creation is a constant and unanswerable evidence of the existence of God, of His infinite power, and of His claims upon our service and our love. And, therefore, St. Paul most justly condemns the proud philosophers of his days, who pretended to deny their dependence upon God, of wilful and culpable ignorance: *Because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God hath manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: His eternal power also and Divinity: so that they are inexcusable.*[4] And thus to those who presume to give in to the principles of infidelity, and to deny the existence and the claims of their Creator, we prove His existence and His rights by the fact of the creation of the world, which is a lasting evidence of this necessary and sacred truth. And Providence, which is a continued Creation, joins in with its testimony in behalf of Him, Who hath made all things in wisdom, and supports them in His superintending power and love. Thus do the works of God bear testimony of Him.

Especially in the Mystery of the Incarnation is this principle true, of the evidence of works. The Mystery itself proved the immensity of God's love for mankind: an active, and a self-sacrificing love. *God so loved the world, as* in proof of this love *to give His Only-Begotten Son*[5] for its redemption. And when our dearest Lord came in the reality of our flesh, to what did He appeal in defence of the claims which He asserted of His Divinity? He argues the matter closely with His adversaries in the fifth chapter of St. John; and as they were not disposed to accept His words only, He waives this point, and says: *if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.*[6] Because a person's statement regarding himself is not of its own nature sufficient evidence of the truth of that statement. He points to the testimony given of Him by St. John the Baptist, but He points more particularly to a more striking testimony than that, namely to the evidence of His own works. *I have a greater testimony than that of John. For the works which the Father hath given*

[3] 1 John v. 7. [4] Rom. i. 19, 20. [5] John iii. 16. [6] Ibid. v. 31.

Me to perfect: the works themselves which I do, give testimony of Me that the Father hath sent Me. And He was always consistent in citing this evidence. To the disciples of John when they came to ask if He were indeed the Messias, His answer was: *Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen: The blind see, the lame walk,*[7] &c. When on one occasion the Jews were questioning Him, and conjured Him no longer to keep them in suspense, but to say openly whether He was the Christ, Jesus answered them: I speak to you, and you believe not; *the works which I do in the Name of My Father, they give testimony of Me.*[8] And when, upon this, they were taking up stones to stone Him, gently He said to them: *Many good works I have shewed to you from My Father; for which of those works do you stone Me?*[9]

At the beginning and at the end of His Life it was the same. On the occasion on which, in His Boyhood, He was questioned by His Mother why He had left her and St. Joseph on their return from Jerusalem, His answer was: *Did you not know that I must be about My Father's work?*[10] And when at the time of His Passion the high priest asked Him about His disciples and His doctrine, He referred to an equivalent testimony: *I have spoken openly to the world: I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither all the Jews resort: and in secret I have spoken nothing. Why askest thou Me? ask them who have heard what I have spoken to them: behold, they know what things I have said.*[11] Thus the openness of His conduct and of His teaching was what He appealed to as evidence in His defence.

And what were these works of His which gave evidence of Him, and to which He appealed with such confidence and consistency? As far as His Father was concerned, they were works of continual and self-sacrificing obedience. *I have come not to do My own Will, but the Will of Him that hath sent Me,*[12] was His motto, repeated over and over again. In this He declared that His Perfection consisted: and so He might well, in the words which are brought before us to-day, declare that the kingdom of Heaven was intended for such as should imitate His example, in not satisfying themselves with saying merely, Lord, Lord! but in doing the same Will which He always followed and obeyed. And as far as we are concerned what were His works? Let the blind, and the lame, and the poor and afflicted of every kind bear their testimony. Let the children whom He befriended, the sick whom He visited, the sinners whom He called to repentance announce to us the character of His dealings with them. Let

[7] Matt. xi. 4. [8] John x. 25. [9] Ibid. 32.
[10] Luke ii. 49. [11] John xviii. 20. [12] Ibid. iv. 34; v. 30; vi. 38.

Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, Jerusalem, and Calvary tell us what they witnessed, and whether His Life was one of words only, or whether it was not a Life of hard, affectionate, persevering labour and suffering. Therefore, when we want to study the character of our dearest Saviour, and desire to tell others what He was, we point to the testimony to which He always appealed, and adduce the evidence of His works.

It is the same with the Church. She claims to be of divine origin : she has been founded to do God's work, and to represent Him upon earth, and in support of her high claims she points to her works. She has her four great Marks of being One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolical : marks exclusively her own. By her fruits she is to be known. She challenges competition, and defies boldly any body of professing Christians to give the evidence which she can give, of being what every Church which pretends to have been founded by Christ ought to be, what He made her and what He intended her to be for ever, even to the end of time. She professes to be infallible in the midst of a deceitful and a deceived world : she professes to be unchangeable in the midst of perpetual instability around her : she declares herself to be indefectible, whilst everything about her is falling to ruin ; and if she is asked to prove her right to such strange and exceptional claims, she points not only to the sacred words and promises of her Founder, by which they have been guaranteed to her, but she points to her works. It is a fact that she does exist, though the world has been trying for eighteen centuries to destroy her; and the unusual character of her claims is the sign for her contradiction now, as it was for her Founder, when He established her, and sent her to achieve against the world the victory of faith.

And of the Saints of the Church we judge in like manner. The proof of their sanctity is found in their works. It is not what they have said, but what they have done, that is an evidence of their holiness. And although the testimony of the Fathers of the Church is always of great value, when we can cite what each of them has said or written in defence of the truths of faith, the weight that is attached to their authority results from the fact, that their holiness of life proved the presence within them of the Spirit of God. For it is an instinctive feeling in the Church that *Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins*;[13] but that *holy men of God have spoken, being inspired by the Holy Ghost.*[14] The works of the Saints follow them, and it is they that are to praise them, as they enter into the gates of Heaven.[15]

[13] Wisd. i. 3. [14] 2 Peter i. 21. [15] Prov. xxxi 31.

II. If, then, in the case of Almighty God Himself, both in His inward and His outward works, and in the Life of our Divine Lord, and in the Church, and in the Saints, the law of the evidence of works is found to hold good and to be universally followed, we must at once admit the truth of the principle asserted in to-day's Gospel, that by their fruits we must judge what men really are, and whether they can stand the practical test which is to be applied to them. It is not they who speak, but they who act in conformity with God's will, who prove themselves to be worthy of the reward for which every Christian ought to labour.

We are all, and each of us, sent into this world to save our souls ; but salvation is to be earned : it is to be worked out. The fruits of a Christian are his works. Are they, or are they not, what they ought to be? The same great God who created us has also been our Lawgiver. The laws and commandments of God are the expressions of His Will : they are to us clear and distinct manifestations of what we must do, and what we must avoid, in order that we may attain to that *Holiness, without which no man shall see God.*[16] The Commandments of God are, certainly, not mere ideal and theoretical expressions of a state of perfection to which it would be better to attain than not. They are something more than that. They are solemn declarations of God's Will, and express conditions which must, *must* be complied with, at the expense of an awful alternative. Our future state for all eternity depends upon our compliance or non-compliance. They are the tests of our works. By them we are to be judged, and therefore in accordance with them we must order our whole life and conduct.

Every one, as St. Paul assures us, has the law written in his heart, and each one's conscience bears witness to him, accusing or defending him.[17] By *the light* of conscience *which enlighteneth every one coming into this world*, each man clearly knows that some works are good and are to be practised, and some evil and to be avoided. But in order that man may the more clearly and certainly know what he is in each case to do or to shun, it has pleased Almighty God to legislate for us, and to reveal for us what things are good and what evil. Therefore He gave His Commandments, which, as the Psalmist says, are a light to our footsteps and a guide to our paths.[18] And, as the Vatican Council has recently declared, 'it hath pleased the Wisdom and Goodness of God to reveal Himself and the eternal decrees of His Will to mankind by another and a supernatural way.'[19]

[16] Heb. xii. 14. [17] Rom. ii. 15. [18] Ps. cxviii.
[19] Constitution : *Dei Filius.*

The duty of Prayer, again, constitutes one of those works, by the omission or performance of which, we are proving what fruit we produce. However difficult it may appear to us to be to keep the Commandments, and in all things to be doing the Will of God, and to be persevering faithfully in this state throughout our life even to the end, Prayer makes it possible; for it is Prayer that brings down into the soul the supernatural help of Divine Grace, under the influence of which we have as much right to say as St. Paul, in the fulness of our confidence: *I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.*[20] But if this duty is neglected: if day after day pass on, and morning and night prayers are omitted, or are said in that languid negligent mode, which prevents them having power enough to find their way to Heaven, no wonder that the Commandments feel so grievous and irksome, and are therefore so frequently transgressed. In order to produce fruit, it is not sufficient that a tree be planted: it requires culture, and the moisture of heaven to make it fruitful, and then it bears evidence of its goodness.

The holy Sacraments, also, are amongst the ordinary tests of a Christian life; for they are the most abundant sources of Grace, and by a careful, faithful, and constant attention to them is manifested whether we are really in earnest about the one great work for which Almighty God has sent us into the world. What can be said of those who will not approach to them? Where is their practical Faith, their Hope and Charity, when such institutions of Divine Love, designed for them, and the means of such rich graces, are neglected and forgotten?

Then there are duties towards our neighbour with which our life is in a great measure filled up: duties of charity, of mercy, of forgiveness, of meekness. These are constantly in one way or another pressing upon us in our intercourse with each other. They form a great province in the distribution of duties made for us in the ten Commandments, in which Almighty God shows us how *He has given to every one a commandment regarding his neighbour.*[21] It was by the fulfilment of this class of works that our Blessed Lord illustrated His Life, and by which He proved the Divinity of His Mission. Here He set us an example that we should walk in His footsteps, and prove by love to our neighbour the sincerity of our profession of love for God. These works are, according to the solemn declaration of our dear Saviour, to form the chief evidence which is to be alleged at the time of our future judgment, and upon the result of which is to depend on

[20] Phil. iv. 13. [21] Ecclus. xvii. 12.

which side we are to be placed, when the separation is to be made between the saved and the condemned.

For remember, my dear brethren, what it is so incumbent upon us never to forget, that it is by our works our fate for eternity is to be decided, when we shall have run the course assigned us, and God will arise and appear in judgment. Even He, the great God Whom we adore and serve, to Whom nothing is secret, Who searcheth the heart and the reins, Who knows every thought of each child of Adam, even He will have the evidence of works brought before Him, when He will be giving to every one accordingly as he has deserved. Does He want such a testimony? He knows what is in man, and we might imagine that the outward evidence of human actions would not be required by Him. Yet He is a just God: His justice is retributive: it is of that nature which makes St. Paul tell us of *the just judgment of God, who will render to every one according to his works.*[22] It will not be by empty professions of allegiance to Him, by boasting of our being members of the Catholic Church, by having had passing feelings of enthusiasm and zeal in her defence, that we shall be able at that time to propitiate Him, and to make Him ready to reward us. By our fruits He will know us, and our fruits will be the works which we have done. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and cast into the fire.*

If upon that Day, when God will be demanding of you to show what fruit you have produced, you would pretend to cite the testimony of your faith, and bid your Judge to remember that you were a member of His own Church: that you had been baptized, and had always through life gloried in your faith, and had died in membership with the Church, might He not say: That was My gift. I did that for you. It was I who allowed you to be a Catholic, though the same favour was not given to others. Your membership with the Church was My work: where was your coöperation with it? How did you keep My Commandments, which you knew were binding upon you? How did you practise Prayer, upon which I always so strongly insisted? How did you deal with My own most cherished Inventions of Love, the Holy Sacraments? How did you act with regard to charity, forbearance, and mercy to your neighbour? These are the fruits which I have been expecting to gather: where are they?

This is a solemn thought, my dear brethren, but it is full of suggestion to us. Do you believe all this? If you do, what can it avail you unless you act up to your conviction? The Gospel of to-day reminds you that you have work to do, not mere profes-

[22] Rom. ii. 6.

sions to make. You have fruit to produce, and your fruit is the evidence of your works. You have the Will of God to do, and this Will is that you should work out your salvation. You are now moved to make the resolution to be more earnest and active, for with such thoughts before us it is impossible not to make such a resolution. Pray humbly and confidently that you may keep it faithfully, and from this day begin to do something more for the salvation of your soul. You may well thank God that you have Faith, but prove how you value that gift by adding to it your own earnest coöperation in fulfilling the duties of which it reminds you. In one short word, do what St. Peter so practically advises: *Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make your calling and election sure.*[23]

[23] 2 Pet. i. 10.

SERMON XLVII.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE CHRISTIAN'S STEWARDSHIP.

Give an account of thy stewardship.

THE Gospel of this Sunday is very suggestive, and suggestive, too, of a most practical lesson. It brings home to each one of us a truth of the closest and the most awful import. Each one of us may easily consider himself to be the chief actor in the parable, and may hear the words spoken directly and personally to himself: *Give an account of thy stewardship.* And as we hear them, they cannot fail to excite within us the remembrance of past duties in which we may have been unfaithful; a conviction of present responsibilities which are ever upon us; and the anticipation of a future Judgment, in which the demand will be made of us to give an account of all that will then be past, in order that our position in eternity may be decided in accordance with those principles of retributive justice, by which Almighty God will be guided in rendering to every man according to his works.

I have said that these words are of an awful import, and they are so. But if I bring them before you to-day, it is not to alarm you, but to make you think, and to urge you to act in accordance with the resolutions which your thinking will suggest. In other words, it is not to make you fear just for the sake of fear, but it is to make you fear for the sake of wisdom. *The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom;*[1] and wisdom implies thoughtfulness, and thoughtfulness leads to a cautious activity. But a fear which leads to despondency is not a fear of God; it is a fear which is against God, which comes from His enemy, and is not inspired by Himself.

Let me lay down for you a few principles. I will not draw out in any fulness of detail the result and application of these principles, but leave this work to your own minds. I will state for you truths which you may take home with you, and may ponder upon throughout the day; and which will prompt you, even before you leave the sacred Presence in which you are now assembled,

[1] Ps. cx.

to pray to Him Who will one day be your Judge, that He will help you to acquit yourselves faithfully of the duties which constitute your stewardship, so that at the time of your judgment you may not fear the inspection of your accounts, but may be able to submit them with a humble and loving confidence.

I. In the first place, you must never forget that you are stewards of God, placed here by Him in order to do His work. For you are God's creatures: *It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves.*[2] When a person makes a thing, it is his own, unless he has been engaged to make it for another. God has not been engaged to make us for another: He has made us for Himself. 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord,' exclaims St. Augustine, 'and our heart is ill at ease until it finds its rest in Thee.' And everything that you have is from God; lent to you and committed to your care, rather than given to you or left at your absolute disposal: *What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou boast, as if thou hadst not received?*[3] Every form and feature of body, every power and gift of mind and soul, every circumstance and accident of life, is from God, and is meant to have reference to Himself. *Every good and perfect gift is from above,*[4] as St. James reminds us. These are amongst the goods entrusted to us; they constitute a part of our stewardship. And God all the time is watching to see how they are used: whether they are directed towards Him from Whom they have come, as He intends they should be; or whether they are turned away from Him, as it so frequently happens that the very gifts of God are made use of as instruments against the glory of the Giver.

God, then, is our Creator. But besides that He is also our Lawgiver, and in many ways He presses upon us the knowledge and the necessity of the observance of His laws. In the moral sense which He has imparted to every rational creature, He communicates to them a clear appreciation of the distinction between right and wrong. Speaking of the Gentiles to whom this light had been given, St. Paul says: *They show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them.*[5] For, in the quiet voice of conscience, there resounds a judgment as solemn as that of the Baptist, when he said boldly to the sensual and prevaricating King Herod: *It is not lawful.*[6] But with regard to you, Almighty God has not been content to leave you simply under the guidance of this natural law, but has revealed to you the special enactments which He once thundered

[2] Ps. xcix. [3] 1 Cor. iv. 7. [4] James i. 17.
[5] Rom. ii. 15. [6] Matt. xiv. 4.

forth upon Mount Sinai, and which, through the teaching of the Church, have been impressed so repeatedly and so practically upon you. He speaks to you by the voice of the ministers of the Church, whom He has appointed to be the exponents and the protectors of His Law, and to perform for you the work of your angel-guardians, *to take charge of you, and to keep you in all your ways.* Remember, if these are checks upon you, they are salutary checks ; they are to help you in the faithful discharge of the duties of your stewardship, to secure caution, activity, and zeal, and to be ever serving as warnings of your future account.

Again : in the supernatural system of Grace, God is always acting with you in reference to your stewardship. He has given you much to do, it may be, but He helps you to do it. He has given you a great charge, but He Himself assists you in acquitting yourself of it. He gives you light that you may know your duty, and strength that you may perform it. It is He that moves you to begin ; that bears you up during the progress of your labour ; that draws you on to its completion, and that crowns you with success. He shows you that, having made you for Himself, He is an interested party in all that concerns you ; and He wills not that you should fail in the noble destiny which is opened before you. And thus you are labouring hand in hand with your God ; and the issue of your labour is that merit, which is the joint product of His Grace and your coöperation. So with St. Paul you can say : *I have laboured, . . yet not I, but the Grace of God with me.*[7] And in order that you may have an abundant supply of Grace, see in how many ways and through how many channels He communicates it to you. Not in the Sacraments only, through which it streams down so copiously ; not in prayer only, which ever brings it down like to the showers which the clouds pour upon the grateful earth to fertilise and enrich it ; not only in reward to our efforts of fidelity, when in the time of trial we remain steadfast ; but even in the performance of the simplest and the most indifferent actions, when done for His sake and in union with His Will. Nay even, when we are turning from Him by the attractions of the world or of self-love, He stands by our side, ready to assist the moment we address ourselves to Him, and at once excites remorse when we have allowed ourselves to be overcome.

He has created you, then : He watches over you : He legislates for you : He assists you and labours with you in your stewardship. But more than this, He will have you ever remember that the day will assuredly come, when the reckoning is

[7] 1 Cor. xv. 10.

to be made, and you are to give up your account. He is thus to be your Judge also, and is to render to you accordingly as you have deserved. This is repeatedly brought before you; because He does not wish you to be taken by surprise. Hearken to some of the declarations which are made to you upon this point. *He will render to every one according to his works*,[8] says St. Paul. And elsewhere he tells us: *We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive what is due to him, accordingly as he hath done well or ill*.[9] And again: *Every man shall receive his reward according to his labour*.[10] And once more: *What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap*.[11] If, then, Almighty God will have it thus brought before you, that you are to be judged, and that your fate in eternity depends upon the result of that judgment, for what other purpose is it but that He would have you ever remember your stewardship, that you are not independent of Him, and at liberty to squander away what He has entrusted to you? He is still keeping a check upon you: He is asserting His claim upon your service: He is reminding you that you are to be *good stewards of the manifold Grace of God*:[12] that you have received these Graces on condition that you use them, and that He will jealously examine what use has been made of them. Quickly, closely, universally will the scrutiny be made. No man will escape it: and no act of any man will be lost sight of. *It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment*.[13] And as it is God who judges,—that God who knows, sees, remembers, and treasures up everything,—the Judgment requires preparing for, and its certainty should never be forgotten. Let us, then, prepare for it; and even now begin to make up our accounts, to set our house in order, that it may not fare ill with us upon that Day.

II. We are stewards, then; but of what are we stewards? We have said that we are not independent of God: we are His creatures. To deny, or to act as if we ignored this dependence, is to sin. Have we denied it, and have we sinned?

1. This is the first question we should ask ourselves now, and we may imagine it to be the first and prominent matter for our future judgment. It is sin which will tell most strikingly in the balance against us. For sin is the destruction of Grace: it is the squandering away of the riches of God, with nothing to present in return. Every sin will then be examined into: and how shall we bear up against the sight that will then meet us in the presence of our great God! *What shall I do, when*

[8] Rom. ii. 6. [9] 2 Cor. v. 10. [10] 1 Cor. iii. 8.
[11] Gal. vi. 8. [12] 1 Pet. iv. 10. [13] Heb. ix. 27.

God shall rise to judge? And when He shall examine, what shall I answer Him?[14] There will be sins directly against God; for although all sin is against Him, some sins will be brought before us, which have had for their matter duties which we owe immediately to God. Some of His Commandments have been promulgated to shield His own Glory. If we have violated these, the blow has been aimed immediately against Himself.

There will be sins against ourselves; for God has imposed upon us a law of charity which we must fulfil towards our own souls. There will be sins of childhood, committed in the full possession of reason, and with a consent and malice that we knew of at the time, though we may have since forgotten them, and never repented of them. Sins of boyhood, into which we may have been led by bad example, and that human respect which so much tyrannises over that age: sins which we committed after a struggle perhaps, but knowing full well that habits of future life were being formed by the acts, in which those early struggles were allowed to terminate. Does God forget them, because we have forgotten them? Or will He not, upon that accounting Day, bring them out before us one by one, as they were committed, unless by contrition and confession we have blotted them out, and have induced Him to hear the prayer which it is so important for us to offer up again and again: *Remember not, O Lord, the sins of my youth.*[15]

There will be sins against our neighbour; for the second table of the Law regulates the duties which thus bind us; and God will search how they have been observed. There will be those sins of others, of which we may have been the wilful and deliberate occasion. For, my dear brethren, you know that you may in many ways make yourselves accessories, and therefore accountable, for the sins of a neighbour. God makes you oftentimes to be your neighbour's keeper; and if you have caused him spiritual danger and ruin, his blood will call out for vengeance against you. Parents for their children: friends for those whom they have influenced towards sin: companions who have invited others to join in evil courses: the sensual and pleasure-seeking worldlings, who have given encouragement to poor wretched outcasts to ply their shameful trade of misery and sin;—all of these will see other books besides their own opened against them, and may find souls ruined, which only for them might have preserved their innocence, might have sinned less frequently and less grievously, and might have found a way to penance and pardon. Think of this, my dear brethren, think of

[14] Job xxxi. 14. [15] Ps. xxiv.

this; for it is worth thinking upon, and it is worth weeping for. But it is worth more than that. It is worth all your labour and caution and prayer, that you may never make yourselves answerable for the sins of others, whose future amendment or penance may become utterly beyond your control. You can do penance for your own sins: how are you to atone for the sins of others, or gain them to repentance? Yet these sins have been committed, and committed through you. You have a knowledge of your duty: you have prayer at your disposal, and you know its efficacy: you have Sacraments to have recourse to; and by these helps and means you have grace offered to you. But, perhaps, those who have been your companions in sin may know or practise none of these, and how are you to gain them back to God, after you have been the means of leading them from Him? A thought like this ought to make you tremble for consequences which you have occasioned, but for which you have oftentimes been but too little solicitous. Yet these sins will come into the account of your stewardship: they must be answered for. Pray, and labour as far as in you lies, for the conversion of sinners, that some restitution may be made to the glory of God, of which you have robbed Him. And in your solicitude pray as did the great penitent of Israel: *From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others spare Thy servant.*[16]

2. Sins such as these will not be the only matter that will swell up the balance against you. You will have to give an account, in answering for your stewardship, of all the graces which God has bestowed upon you, or had destined to bestow, if you had been faithful. I have already reminded you of the great reality of Grace, resulting from the connexion between yourself and Almighty God, as creatures connected with Creator. But you must answer for the consequences of Grace. Every Grace will be brought forward, and He who *judges justice*[17] will examine whether each has produced its fruit within you. If sins represent your squandering, graces represent the abundance of wealth that has been placed under your care. Oh! what revelations will be made, when these riches of the goodness of God are told over, and you will see what through them you might have become, but how imperfect has been their result, because of your own heedlessness and refusal to appreciate them! You will see what you were upon the happy day of your Baptism, when you were a very Angel upon earth, and Heaven became yours by the claim to it which that Sacrament gave you. Years passed on: years of innocence, because they were years of irresponsibility, but years also in which

[16] Ps. xviii. [17] Ibid. ix.

your good God was bestowing upon you signs of love and protection for which, perhaps, you had never thought of making Him a return of thanksgiving.

Then there will be brought before you other Sacramental graces of which you had been the subject. You will be bearing upon you the seal of your Confirmation, that second stamp which God had impressed upon you, in order to mark you doubly as His own. How was that Grace received, and how has it been dealt with? The happy day of your First Communion will again present itself before you: and all the number of times that the act of that day had been repeated will be recounted. Your intercourse with the Blessed Sacrament, sweet Mystery of Love! will be examined into. What is to be the result of such an inspection? Your Confessions, upon which St. Alphonsus tells us the salvation of the soul usually depends more than upon any other act of adult life, will be searched into: what are they to reveal? All other Graces given, or at least offered to you through the willing ministry of the Church, through her preaching, warnings, festivals, and devotions, will be detailed before you: what of them? The good example of others, which you could so easily have imitated, will be numbered amongst the graces afforded to you: all the advantages of membership with the Church will be displayed in the richness of their profusion: and you may have to be reminded, that if in Tyre and in Sidon had been done wonders of which you were the witness, their return would have been far more grateful than yours.

3. Another account which will be demanded of you will be that of your duties. From the time of your arriving at the use of reason until the time of your death, you have had duties to perform. You have been a responsible being, and this implies that obligations have been upon you. The meaning of Religion implies this, for by that is expressed the reality of your being bound to the performance of certain acts; and to be bound is to have a duty imposed upon us. You have had duties towards God: of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, fear, confidence, and love: duties of Prayer, of exercising the theological Acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity; of dealing with the Sacraments, of recognising His Presence, of Purity of Intention, of corresponding with His inspirations. You have had duties towards yourself: of purity, humility, circumspection, self-respect: duties especially connected with the state of life in which Divine Providence had placed you. You have had duties towards your neighbour: of justice, charity, meekness, forgiveness, mercy, and forbearance. Parents and children; masters and servants; married persons towards each other; our whole social state has implied a constant succession of

duties, in the midst of which we have been habitually moving all through life. These will be found to have contributed immensely to the work of our stewardship.

When we think, then, of that future accounting Day on which so literally will be said to us : *Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer*, are we not awakened to a sense of our heavy responsibility ? and may we not again exclaim : *What shall I do, when God shall rise to judge ? And when He shall examine, what shall I answer Him ?*

III. But, my dear brethren, what is all this now to lead to ? Not to mere fear, which will avail nothing, or will drive us to despondency, but to those active measures which we can adopt, and which will secure for us a favourable judgment. What did the steward do, when so suddenly he was summoned by his master to give an account of his stewardship ? He did not despond, but he deliberated, and at once vigorously set about pursuing the means which he considered the most conducive to his future advantage. *He said within himself : What shall I do ?* And when he made up his mind what he ought to do for his good, he did it. He had a little time to prepare, and he made the most of that time. He acted most unjustly, indeed ; but yet he was praised by his master for his ingenuity ; and this praise is recorded, not that we should imitate him in his injustice, but that we should also learn to make the most of our time of warning, and learn to do for our spiritual good what he did for his temporal interest. He made provision for the future ; and this is what we must do. We have a Master to deal with, whom we cannot deceive by adopting unjust courses, but whom we can propitiate by active and earnest measures which are within our reach.

We must *think*. And surely plenty has been suggested for us to think upon. How can we help thinking, when the recollection of our future certain judgment, from which we cannot possibly escape, is so strikingly brought before us ? We must convince ourselves of our responsibility : this is nothing imaginary ; it is most real and practical. We must have a horror of sin, which stands so dreadfully against us. We must entertain a deep sense of the value of Grace, which is given to us to use for our advantage, and not merely that it may be weighed as having been offered to us, and perhaps not coöperated with. We must profit of all the means of Grace : of Prayer, of the Sacraments, of the advantages secured to us through the ministry and supervision of the Church, whose children we are. We must, as the steward did, say within ourselves : *What shall I do ?* but say it with a determination of doing what we feel we ought to do.

We must *examine*, and try in the light of God to ascertain how matters are standing between Himself and us. It is in this way that we can give an account of our stewardship to ourselves, before we are called upon to give it to God. The great benefit of the Sacrament of Penance is, that it keeps us in the habit of giving this preliminary account; and in the examination of Conscience which that good work implies, we are preparing ourselves against any future surprise. If upon examination you find, that there is something you would wish to put to rights before you give your account to God, correct it at once. Your time may not be long; for you know not the day nor the hour, when your Master may suddenly break in upon you and demand your account.

We must *resolve* to amend what is amiss, and to be very circumspect. As St. Jerome used always to keep before his mind the thought of the future General Judgment, and whether he ate, or drank, or read, or prayed, the sound was always in his ears: Arise, ye dead, and come to Judgment: so in every act that we perform, we must remember that matter is being supplied for our own accounting Day, and that each will be either reckoned in favour of or against us, when we are then giving the account of our stewardship.

And we must *pray*. However alarming the prospect may be which presents itself before us, as we are thinking of that future account, prayer is all powerful in dispelling a weak despondency, and in filling us with hopeful and generous feelings. Our Judge is one who will not now be harsh with us, if we run to Him with a confiding heart: declare to Him where we have wronged Him, and how we desire to make compensation. He will ever help us to put matters straight, will at once forgive our errors, and upon our promise of amendment, will bless us and simply say: Go, and sin no more. Nor do our prayers ascend alone before His throne. Saints and Angels join in with theirs. Mary, the Refuge of sinners, whom we so often call upon to 'pray for us, now and at the hour of our death,' will give her powerful help, and confidence will be restored to us in the discharge of our service.

Here, then, is the development, and the result of our thoughts upon our stewardship. Fear will make us cautious: caution will secure obedience: obedience will lead to practice: practice will secure success; and success is identical with that victory of which He that is to judge us has already declared: *To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with Me in My Throne. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.*[18]

[18] Rev. iii. 21, ii. 10.

SERMON XLVIII.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

JESUS WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM.

Seeing the city, He wept over it.

The event recorded in this day's Gospel, of Jesus weeping over the city of Jerusalem, is an affecting one; but more than that, it is instructive and very suggestive to us of caution. It is affecting; for to see one whom we love, moved to such sorrow as to shed tears always evokes our sympathy. Our dear Lord had not come to shed tears, but to shed His Precious Blood. But His Sacred Heart had, indeed, many causes for sorrow; and as He was man, not in appearance only, but in reality, He had the feelings of man, and well might He express those feelings of sorrow by tears. But it is instructive also; because Jesus not only weeps, but, as the Wisdom of God, He speaks also, and gives the reason of the heavy sorrow which oppressed Him. And the event is very suggestive of caution; because, in the reason which is assigned for these tears, may be found a fault which we have reason to impute to ourselves; so that Jesus may perhaps have reason to weep over us also. Let us follow our Divine Lord in the act thus recorded for us, and gather the benefit which the study of this act is calculated to secure.

I. It is at the end of the nineteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, that the fact is recorded which the Church invites us to consider this day. Our Blessed Lord is there represented before us as being on His return from Jericho, where He had just converted Zachæus, and become a guest in his house. He rises, and prepares to return to Jerusalem. It was to be His last visit to that unhappy city, for the day of His Crucifixion was now close at hand. He sends forward two of His disciples to make preparations for His solemn entry. Great crowds gathered about Him, and they seemed to increase as He drew nearer to Jerusalem. It was an hour of triumph for Him; because His disciples sang His praises as they moved along, and thanked

God for all the mighty works which they had seen performed by Him. They proclaimed His royalty, and sang aloud: *Blessed be the king who cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven and glory on high.*[1] Then the envying Pharisees, always jealous of His influence with the people, called upon Him, as if appealing to His well-known humility: *Master, rebuke Thy disciples. To whom He said: I say to you, that if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out.*

At last Jerusalem came into sight; *and seeing the city, He wept over it.* For the sight of the city, upon which He was now looking from a distance for the last time before His Passion—for His next view of it was to be from the heights of Calvary—suggested to Him all that God had done for its favoured but ungrateful inhabitants: all that He Himself, in the days of His missionary labours, had been so constantly and so affectionately doing in behalf of those who were so slow in receiving Him, and were soon to prove themselves so zealous in encompassing His Death. He knew well what great events were on the eve of being accomplished; and the songs of triumph which were then resounding about Him, were only the more suggestive of sorrow, because He felt how discordant they were with other cries, which within a week would be heard rending the air.

See Him, then, now, like Jeremias of old, taking up His position, and singing His lamentation over the unhappy Jerusalem, and calling upon the city, even yet, however late, to stay in its career of iniquity, and to be converted to the Lord its God. The knowledge of the past history of that city was clear before His mind. As He had lived before the days of Abraham, so had He been a witness of every act which His Father had performed in behalf of Jerusalem. God had chosen one nation as His own favoured one; and the capital city of that nation, Jerusalem, He had loved and honoured beyond any other city in the world. It was His own metropolis: there He had fixed His throne upon earth, and ruled with a loving sway over a people to whom He was always manifesting His predilection. With what heartiness and gratitude must not the devout children of Israel have sung that psalm of David which recited these privileges: *Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem: praise thy God, O Sion. Because He has strengthened the bolts of thy gates: He hath blessed thy children within thee: Who hath placed peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the fat of corn. . . He hath not done in like manner to every nation: and His judgments He hath not manifested to them.*[2] There stood His one Temple, in which alone upon earth

[1] Luke xix. 38. [2] Ps. cxlvii. Lauda Jerusalem.

He recognised a form of worship after His own Heart, and in which He accepted that tribute of sacrifice which was well-pleasing before Him. To that city He had sent prophet after prophet, either to announce His messages of peace and blessing, or to proclaim warnings when punishment was in store.

Its priesthood was consecrated in accordance with a ritual drawn up by Himself, and the whole form of ceremonies was from Him. Even when, in their waywardness, the people of that city demanded a king to reign over them, Almighty God condescended to direct the mode of his being anointed to the regal dignity. In time of danger He protected the city again and again against its enemies, and sheltered it as the apple of His eye. Literally true and proved by a long series of facts were the jubilant exclamations of King David: *The Lord loveth the gates of Sion above all the tabernacles of Jacob. Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God!*[3] These favours, indeed, were figures of better things to come in the days of a later dispensation; but this was only another reason why God so much loved Jerusalem, because it contained within itself the germ of future blessings, and was a living prophetical declaration of the riches which were to be one day so profusely showered upon His Church. So our Lord wept, as He thought of the past history of the city.

But greater cause had He for tears when He foresaw what awaited Jerusalem in the future. And it is this, indeed, that He declares to be now the motive of His weeping. For all the favours which Almighty God had shown to that city, she had made but poor and ungrateful returns. Our dear Lord is represented in St. Matthew's Gospel, when weeping over the city, as recording her past acts of impiety and ingratitude: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not!*[4] But because of this ingratitude, and especially because of the awful crime of Deicide, which she was so soon to commit, the time of her tribulation was drawing on; and as Jesus thought of it, He wept. He felt that many of those about Him, who were then singing Hosanna, would join speedily in the cruel shout of, *Away with Him! Crucify Him: crucify Him!*

Who has ever read the history of the most memorable and calamitous siege recorded in the whole of the annals of the world, the siege of Jerusalem under Titus, and does not feel that our most compassionate Lord had good reason to weep as He was

[3] Ps. lxxxvi. [4] Matt. xxiii. 37.

taking His last view of that ungrateful city![5] Beginning at Easter in the year of our Lord 70, it lasted until August. The city at the time was full of pilgrims who had come in for the Festival of the Pasch. Many of the Christians escaped by following the warning given by our Blessed Lord to flee to the mountains. The assailants literally verified the prophetical declaration. They cast a trench about the city and straitened her on every side. The massacre of the inhabitants seems to be exaggerated, as we read the numbers, although the truth is certified by the concurrent testimonies of Jewish and heathen historians,[6] who calculate the deaths as amounting to a million and one hundred thousand persons. The victors, in order to intimidate the inhabitants to a surrender, used to crucify five hundred prisoners each day, until no more wood could be found for making crosses. A famine set in so severely, that Jeremias's prophecy was literally fulfilled, and mothers ate their own offspring. The Temple was utterly burnt down, and in future attempts to rebuild it, the announcement was made true, that not a stone was left upon a stone. All this was pictured then before the mind of our Lord, as He stopped, when He came upon that day within sight of the city, and *wept over it.*

II. But what was it that our Divine Lord had Himself personally done in favour of Jerusalem, in the days of His Ministry? because it is from this we may learn our most instructive lesson. Two things our Lord did for Jerusalem, and the same two He does in our regard. He worked and He taught. So St. Luke, in the opening of the Acts of the Apostles, summarises what he had written in his former treatise, the Gospel, in the words: *all things which Jesus began to do and to teach.*

He *taught* in Jerusalem. For He was the Word, and the Wisdom of the Father, and He came to make known the revelations of God. He came to utter things that had been hidden from the foundation of the world.[7] And it was Jerusalem that He chose by preference as the place of His teaching. Even when a Boy, manifesting what we may call signs of a future vocation, it is by teaching in Jerusalem that He makes this manifestation, being found after those anxious three days of separation, seated in the Temple of Jerusalem in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions; and by the astonishment which He occasioned at His wisdom and answers, giving them an opportunity of recognising Him as one divinely sent amongst them.

[5] See the beautiful narrative of this siege in Darras' *Hist. de l'Eglise*, vol. vi. pp. 288-319.

[6] Josephus and Tacitus.

[7] Matt. xiii. 35.

Then retiring to Nazareth for some years, He suspends His work of teaching, grows in wisdom and age and grace, and fits Himself for His future office.

Then He again emerges from His retirement, and enters with zealous energy upon His duties as a Teacher. Sometimes it is in the desert: sometimes by the side of the sea: sometimes on a mountain: sometimes in the neighbouring towns and villages, that His voice is heard; but so frequently was it in Jerusalem, that the Evangelist does not hesitate to say: *He was daily teaching in the Temple.*[8] And when He condescended to justify His conduct before those who came to seize Him at the onset of His Passion, He said to them: *I was daily with you in the Temple, teaching.*[9]

He had a great task before Him, and it required constant teaching upon His part. He had a new religion to propagate, not contrary to, but a perfection and development of the old. He had new maxims to enforce, which until that time had not been heard uttered by the mouth of any preacher: He had new revelations to make, new Sacraments and practices to institute: He had to form His Apostles for the work of teaching all nations, which He had designed for them: and all this required that labour of teaching, which He was so constantly exercising in Jerusalem.

This was an opportunity afforded to that city, which none shared equally with her. She had been prepared by previous acts upon the part of Almighty God, for the blessing she was to receive when the Redeemer was to come into the midst of her, to sanctify her Temple by His presence and His teaching, and was to make known in person, truths which He had before communicated through priests and prophets. In Jerusalem He was to lay the foundation of His Church, which was to be a teaching Church. There He promised the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and there He sent Him down in due time upon them. There He instituted the Sacraments, and gave the Apostles and their successors authority to administer them. There by example, as well as by word, He taught those high degrees of mercifulness, meekness, humility, and charity, by which He wished His disciples to be recognised. And this was one great privilege given, with almost an exclusive predilection, to the city of Jerusalem.

But besides teaching in Jerusalem those lessons which the Gospel has treasured up for us, our Blessed Lord also *worked* in that privileged city. He had come upon earth to lead a life of work, and had to fulfil what the Psalmist had said of Him: *I am poor and in labours from my youth.*[10] It was not to be by word

[8] Luke xix. 47. [9] Mark xiv. 49. [10] Ps. lxvii.

only, nor by word principally, but especially by the testimony of His works that He was to prove His Divinity, and to exhibit His love for Jerusalem. He had led an industrious and obedient life, we may easily imagine, in the retirement of Nazareth. But when He came forth from that retirement, and *went about doing good*,[11] it was mostly in Jerusalem that that good was witnessed. Look at one day's work as it is described for us in the first chapter of St. Mark's Gospel. It is in Capharnaum that that day is spent, but it is a description of what was done more frequently in Jerusalem. Early in the day He teaches in the synagogue : then He is interrupted in His preaching in order to cast out an evil spirit from a possessed body. Next He proceeds to perform another miraculous work in curing Peter's mother-in-law. Then He is represented in the evening, blessing the children who are brought to Him, and in healing many sick, and casting out other devils. Rising very early next morning, He commences the day by prayer in a desert place ; but even there He cannot be left alone, and when those that had been searching for Him find Him in His solitude, they tell Him that every one is seeking for Him. Then He moves on to do the same work in other towns and villages, which are allowed to share in some degree in blessings which were almost constantly being showered down upon Jerusalem.

His most striking works were His miracles, and of these Jerusalem was most frequently the scene. They were such as ought certainly to have awed that faithless city into an acknowledgment of His Divinity. This was their motive, for it was of them our Divine Lord said : *The works which I do, they bear testimony of Me.*[12] And it was in Jerusalem and of the people of Jerusalem that He said, when speaking of these works : *If I had not done amongst them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin ;* but now they *have both seen and hated both Me and My Father.*[13] Upon some, indeed, these works produced the desired effect, and Nicodemus expressed what many a disciple must have felt, when he said : *We know that Thou art come a teacher from God ; for no man can do these signs which Thou dost unless God be with him.*[14] And whole crowds were sometimes influenced, at least for a time, by what they saw, as after one of His miracles we hear them cry out in admiration : *A great prophet is risen up amongst us, and God hath visited His people.*[15] To these He pointed in proof of His being the Messias, when John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Him distinctly the question, and He quoted what Isaias had foretold regarding these works.[16] If,

[11] Acts x. 38. [12] John v. 36. [13] Ibid. xv. 24.
[14] Ibid. iii. 2. [15] Luke vii. 16. [16] Matt. xi. 3-5.

then, of other cities of Judæa our Lord declared that such was their infidelity, that Tyre and Sidon, and even Sodom, would have been moved to repentance and faith if they had witnessed favours of which they had been the scene, how much greater reason had He to weep over the blindness and incredulity of Jerusalem.

One most sacred class of works was reserved for the exclusive privilege of Jerusalem. There was to be laid the foundation of the Christian Church. Isaias had foretold of this privilege : *the law shall come forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*[17] Within the walls of that city, or close in its neighbourhood, He summoned His Apostles together, to hear the various charges and commissions which He used to deliver to them in connexion with the sacred mission designed for them. There He instituted the Sacramental system ; and although on the day on which He was standing outside and weeping over the city, these great Mysteries were not yet fully developed, nor their exercise fully handed over to His Apostles, yet He had even then designed Jerusalem for the spot whence these institutions of His law were to proceed, and where they were to be solemnly inaugurated. In Jerusalem was taught the necessity of Baptism to Nicodemus, and there was given to the Apostles the order to go and administer it in every nation. There the Holy Ghost was promised, and there He came down, on the day of the promulgation of the New Law, to confirm the Apostles, and give them the security of future success. There was pronounced upon the Apostles the sacred words giving them power to absolve from sin. There was instituted the holiest of all the dispensations of God's mercy, love, and goodness : the Adorable Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist. For it was to be in a few days after these tears were being shed, that Jesus, meeting His Apostles for the last time, was to fulfil the promise He had made to them long before, that He would give them His own Body and Blood for the salvation and perfection of their souls. Jerusalem, therefore, was the first home of the Blessed Sacrament. There was said the first Mass ; and there the Apostles made their first Communion, having been there also the first ordained to the sacred Priesthood.

Did not, then, our dear Lord do great things for Jerusalem? And might He not well find reason to weep over her, when He looked back upon her past ingratitude, saw her present insensibility, and contemplated her future infidelity and her consequent ruin? She knew not the day of her visitation at any time. She knew it not when Prophets visited her on their embassies from God. She knew it not when the Son of God Himself came, and

[17] Is. ii. 3.

taught and worked within her walls. And she knew it not when the Church was founded in the midst of her, and the Apostles began to proclaim the glory of the Name of Him who had been crucified by her princes and priests. Therefore the anger of God at last came upon her, and all her glories were buried in desolation.

III. But, my dear brethren, does not Jesus still have reason to weep over many a Jerusalem? The commission which was given in that city to the Apostles to go forth and spread everywhere the doctrines which they had learnt there has been fulfilled, and nations have now been gained to the faith. Each Christian soul has become what Jerusalem had been, a privileged abode of God's power and grace, and within each have been manifested signs of the most generous love. But has not the part of Jerusalem been acted over again, and love been answered by disobedience and ingratitude? Has each of us appreciated what has been done for us? and have we known the time and manner of our visitation? Why condemn Jerusalem, and pretend to sympathise with our Lord and join in His tears, when perhaps we ourselves are even now giving cause, why those tears should be shed over ourselves? Let us see what is the real case.

In the case of each of us Jesus has taught. All His revelations have been communicated to us with precisely the same certainty as if we had heard them from His own lips. *He that heareth you heareth Me*, are words of perpetual truthfulness and application. All our duties, each and every one of them, have been brought home to us with a certainty, an authority, and a conviction, which leaves nothing to be desired. If our Blessed Lord had manifested Himself to us in the flesh, and had spoken to us personally, as He did to those who saw and heard Him in Jerusalem, we could not be more certain than we now are of our duties with regard to faith and practice. To doubt the Church which teaches us, would be to doubt Him who teaches us through the Church. To disobey and reject the Church, would be to disobey and reject Himself. And this is to be admitted not only in matters of doctrine, upon which we can perhaps easily consider ourselves at peace, inasmuch as we do not deny what the Church teaches, but especially in matters of practice, because in every true Christian, outward practice is a proof of inward faith.

And in the case of each of us Jesus has worked, and is working. Divine Grace is the working of God in our soul, and it is our duty to coöperate, that is to say, to work with it. It is in this respect that each soul most closely resembles Jerusalem, and is under the visitation of God. Which of us can recount all that

our good God has thus so abundantly done for us? How has He not in Creation, in Providence, in Prayer, in the Holy Sacraments, been manifesting His power and His love in our behalf? Did He ever do more for a single soul in Jerusalem than He has done for us? May not we even extend the argument of our Blessed Lord, and say, that if in Jerusalem itself He had done what He has done in our regard, even that thoughtless city would have been moved to acknowledge the time of its visitation? For the privileges of the Church are greater than those of Jerusalem; and we deserve the admonition of St. Paul, who reminds us of this fact. For, speaking of the punishments which Almighty God had in the olden times inflicted upon the Israelites, he says: *Now all these things happened to them in figure, and they are written for our correction.*[18] And how are we to profit by the correction, except by being convinced, that, as we are enjoying the reality of what was given only in figure to Jerusalem, we are required to show great fidelity lest something worse befall us in punishment of our disobedience? Let us not cause our dear Lord to weep over us, and to rebuke us for not acknowledging the things that are for our peace.

Let us take the warning, and in one short word master the lesson, which is this: If we share in the unfaithfulness of Jerusalem, we shall share in her ruin. But if we are corrected by her example, and accept the caution that is given to us through her, we shall inherit peace and blessing, because we have believed what has been said to us, and have known the day of our visitation.

[18] 1 Cor. x. 11.

SERMON XLIX.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

DIFFERENCE OF RESULT FROM THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES.

Two men went up into the Temple to pray.

Of all the Parables of our Divine Lord there is, perhaps, not one that is generally better known than that which forms the matter of this day's Gospel: the Pharisee and the Publican. The Parable is familiar and intelligible to every one who has heard it, from the fact of the two characters being drawn so clearly, and their distinctive features being so unmistakably marked, that once seen and known they never can be misunderstood or forgotten. And it is well known also, because of the many lessons it enforces, and the various practical applications which have been made of it, since it was first spoken by the sacred lips which uttered it. Among the many applications of which the Parable is capable, I will select for our instruction this morning one that is sufficiently obvious. It is this: that there is a great and wide difference in the result of one and the same reality used and applied by different individuals. How often do we hear it said, that there is a great difference between man and man! You may take two individuals under the very same outward circumstances, with the same opportunities, the same interests, the same end in view, and yet the results are totally different. And so our dear Lord speaks at the end of the Parable of the great difference which then existed, between two men who at the beginning are represented as entering upon the same course. *Two men went up into the Temple to pray.* Just see in what points they resemble each other. They go together, at the same time, into the same holy place, and for the same purpose: they go into the Temple, and we are expressly told that they both go to pray. Each of them does, after his own way, what he went in to do. But one comes out justified, the other condemned: one exalted, the other disgraced in the eyes of God: one is held up as a pattern to imitate, the other as an example to be cautioned against and to avoid. What a difference in the end between two men, who at the onset had had equal opportunities!

Let us turn this light upon ourselves, and see whether we

may not stand in very unfavourable comparison with some, with whom we started under the very same opportunities of success. We can, perhaps, easily think of some whom we know to have made steady and good progress towards union with God, and have moved on in the way of their perfection, whilst we who could have done the same, had we been so determined, are further removed from God now than in days when we and they seemed to be walking with one mind and consent in the house of God,[1] and to be starting together with the determination of attaining to the same reward. Where is it that we have the same opportunities with those that have outstripped us? And where have we differed in the use of those opportunities? As our Blessed Lord to-day introduces the two characters of the parable as going into the Temple, we will also take our connexion with the Temple of God, a place open and accessible to all, and rich in the means of grace to all, as the chief opportunity which we will consider. And we will then see how variously this opportunity has been used.

I. It has pleased Almighty God, from the time that He first ordered a Temple to be dedicated in His honour, to associate that holy spot with the spiritual good of His people. The angelical doctor, St. Thomas of Aquin, tells us[2] that it is not so much upon God's account, as upon man's, that special places are set apart for the more fitting and solemn worship of the Almighty. Man requires them for the purpose of securing greater reverence, and because the arrangement and adjustment of such buildings, by their adaptation towards the end for which they are constructed, may the more strikingly tell us of what belongs to God. Not that such a place is essential for God's worship. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,*[3] and everywhere He is able and ready to accept the tribute of faith and love, which devout souls in their acts of prayer pour out before Him. He can be worshipped on the mountain-top, as by Elias: in a dungeon, as by Jeremias: in a prison cell, as by Daniel: in the galleys, as by the exiles of Babylon: in secret recesses under the earth, as by the primitive Christians in the Catacombs: in the desert, as by John the Baptist, and those giants of sanctity the hermit saints. Yet God wishes certain spots to be peculiarly vindicated for Himself. All time is His: yet He commands a Sabbath. All space is His: yet He has commanded the building of temples; for He will have places as well as times to be devoted exclusively to Himself.

To the children of Israel, therefore, He gave the command

[1] Ps. liv. [2] 1. 2. q. 102, a. 4. [3] Ps. xxiii.

regarding which He said to Moses: *They shall make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in the midst of them.*[4] David prepared with very great joy for the building of the glorious Temple, which Solomon his son built in such perfection of beauty, and which he consecrated with such magnificent solemnity, making on the day of its dedication the covenant which was accepted by God, that whatever grace was sought with confidence within its walls should be accorded by Him whose house it then became. Well might the Jews love their holy and beautiful Temple! It was everything to them upon earth, because it was the pledge of God's love for them, and of their love for God. There used they to assemble for the morning and evening sacrifice. There did they offer up prayers which so often brought them seasonable aid in times of trouble. There did parents offer up their firstborn, even as Jesus was offered on the fortieth day after His birth. There did they see the miraculous fire come down and consume the holocausts, which they had prepared as the tribute of their adoration. With reason did they weep for it in their exile, and become full of desolation at the news of its destruction: and well might they, on their return from captivity, make the rebuilding of the house of God the first object of their anxiety and zeal!

We are told in the Gospel how our Lord loved the Temple; for He recognised it as a pledge of love between His Father and His creatures. In His Infancy He was taken into it to be presented to His Father; and on this account the prophet Aggeus had sung the praises of the latter Temple as transcending the former in glory.[5] Thither He had been accustomed to go each year even in His Childhood, on the solemnities which used to draw worshippers from the various cities and districts to pay their homage to the God of Israel; for there, upon one of those occasions, He was found in the midst of the doctors after the three days' separation from His anxious parents. There He used to be daily teaching during the days of His ministry; and in defence of its honour we read of the two greatest manifestations of His zeal, when He indignantly drove out of it those who were profaning it. It was the prophetical knowledge of its impending destruction, which occasioned the affecting scene brought before us last Sunday in the Gospel, of His weeping over Jerusalem.

If the Temple in the olden dispensation was a source of grace and blessing because of the opportunities it afforded towards the fulfilment of duties acceptable to God, what, after all, were its privileges in comparison with a Christian Church? Here, my dear brethren, in the one in which we are now gathered together,

[4] Exod. xxv. 8. [5] Aggeus ii. 10.

what are the opportunities afforded to us? It is associated with far greater realities than was that holy house of God, which was so much valued by the devout Israelites. Here is offered up a more valuable Sacrifice than ever was witnessed within that former one: that Sacrifice, of which all that preceded were but figures. Here is prayer more efficacious, because of the constant Presence of Him, in the Sacrament of His love, through whom and with whom we send up our petitions with such unshaken confidence before the Throne of Grace. Here are administered Sacraments, rich channels of grace, which surpass in efficacy any of the institutions of the old law. Here higher mysteries of religion are taught than had been revealed to our forefathers, and are taught with a sanction and authority greater than that which had before the time of our Lord been attached to the exponents of the truths of revelation. Here is a home of religion far more accessible than the old Temple; for the time has now come when Jerusalem is not the only place in which Almighty God will have a house consecrated to His service, but in every place, from the rising to the setting of the sun, the continual Sacrifice is being offered, and from Temples of God prayers are unceasingly streaming forth to Heaven.

But there is one reality associated with a Christian Church which accounts for everything, and which gives an answer to the question why we so love our churches, prepare and guard them with such anxious care, consecrate them with such a rich liturgy, and decorate them with every manifestation of a generous and devoted spirit. A Catholic Church is the home of the Blessed Sacrament; and when I say this, I say all that need be said of the opportunities it affords to those who are willing to make use of them, in order to help themselves on in the way to Heaven. If the Psalmist expressed the sentiment of every devout and loving soul, in the days in which his songs of praise and thanksgiving were chanted in the old Temple, when he said: *He hath not done thus to every nation, nor hath He manifested to them His judgments*,[6] does not the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in our Churches give us reason to thank and to glorify God, for having done so much more for us, and having given us greater opportunities for loving Him than even that privileged nation possessed!

II. Let us now see how different are the results which follow from this same opportunity afforded by our Temple into which we all come to pray. For, observe that what we have stated as sources of grace and blessing in a Catholic Church are common to all. None, not one of you, feels himself excluded, if he will

[6] Ps. cxlvii.

but avail himself of what is at his disposal. The Church is meant as a welcome home for all and each; and when other houses may be closed against you and refuse to shelter you, here you can do what the good queen, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, did, when driven away from her own abode by those whom she had once befriended: you can come and find comfort here, and claim it as a greater right, just because the hand of affliction is upon you.

The daily Sacrifice is for all. It is the Banquet to which all of you are invited, and to whom the summons is sent forth in eager expectation of your obeying it: *come to the marriage.* For those who attend, a special mention is made in each Mass; when the priest, in the Memento for the living, begs Almighty God to remember 'all those that are standing around whose faith and devotion are known'[7] by Him. Over them is shed the enriching grace which goeth forth from the Victim bleeding upon the altar: for all, indeed, as He bled for all upon Calvary; but especially for those who are closer within reach of His sacred influence. Upon these is pronounced the blessing which enables them to return from the sacred rite at which they have assisted, and to enter upon the duties of the day with a strong heart and a generous will. The abiding Presence of our dearest Lord in the adorable Sacrament is for all. Virtue is here ever issuing forth from Him, healing all who come to seek relief. No one is sent away unheard or unrewarded. For it is not in the Sacrifice of the Mass only, but continuously and perseveringly, day and night, that our Lord is here ready to be found, and to be addressed by those who come to seek Him.

The Sacraments are for all. Each one, according to his state and his necessity, is supplied with the grace which these channels communicate. *All you that thirst come to the waters.*[8] Through these means, in a state of sin, pardon can be found: in a state of grace, a closer union with God is to be gained: in the time of want, help and strength are to be secured. No one is rejected, if properly disposed; and the hard and narrow way to Heaven is rendered to all easier and more delightful.

The teaching which is here communicated is for all. At the present moment, for instance, the same lesson is addressed to all. The duty of the Watchman of Israel is fulfilled in regard to all without exception. Warning is given to sinners, whoever they are, and they are admonished to return to Him who desires not their death, but their conversion. Encouragement to those that are endeavouring to fulfil faithfully the duties of their state is held out cheerfully and confidently, and they are urged on to pursue

[7] 'Et omnium circumstantium.' [8] Isaias lv. 1.

with good hope the path of their perfection. The difficulty of perseverance, but the necessity and the means of gaining it, are brought before the minds of all, in order to secure that caution without which we cannot expect success. Lessons of prayer are impressed upon all, and the reward which attends its practice is displayed for their encouragement. Festivals, Devotions, Ceremonies, and all the helps which our good Mother the Church is so rich in extending to us, are instituted and observed for the benefit of all, in order to show them some faint representation of what is to be their portion hereafter in the Church Triumphant. And of all these advantages no one can be ignorant; for, and this is itself an advantage, the recollection of them is over and over again pressed upon the notice of every child of the Church.

But are the consequences the same? This is our question and our lesson. Do all derive the same benefit from means and opportunities which are common to all? There are some, God be praised! who use these advantages faithfully and perseveringly. They assist at Mass every day, and make this to be one of their ordinary duties, but the most sacred of all. They are regular and edifying in their attendance at all the religious services of the Church: they love her devotions, and practise them with love and fidelity. To them the Sacraments are practical and solid realities. Frequent confession keeps their minds and consciences pure and without reproach. Holy Communion feeds them with heavenly comfort, and draws and preserves them in close intimacy with God. The Blessed Sacrament is no stranger to them. They cultivate devout and loving familiarity with their Lord in this Adorable Mystery by their daily visit. They prove their love by the frequency with which they are drawn towards this Object of love, and our Lord never intends to include them in the rebuke which He addresses from His Tabernacle, when He complains: *I said: Behold Me, behold Me, to a nation that did not call upon My Name: I spread forth My hands all the day to an unbelieving people.*[9] They have never doubted (why should they?) the goodness and generosity of Him, whose delights are here shown to be amongst the children of men. And with regard to the duty of hearing the instructions, which under such sacred circumstances are given in the house of God, such ones as these never consider themselves sufficiently enlightened to despise what is spoken by God's ministers. They hear the word of God, and keep it. These are the faithful children of God, who make use of the opportunities which are afforded them; and thus, not because they have helps, but because they avail themselves of them,

[9] Is. lxv. 1, 2.

they become acceptable in the eyes of their present Witness and their future Judge.

There are others who, unfortunately, present a very different appearance in the eyes of God and man. Not that man is to judge them, for this belongs to God alone; but yet even in the eyes of man, there are to be found in such ones few signs of outward edification, or of an appreciation of the privileges of their state. Some never think of coming *to the Temple to pray*, except on the occasions on which they may think themselves bound, under grievous obligation, to comply with commands from which they cannot emancipate themselves. They attend at Mass on Sundays and Festivals, perhaps; but at the daily Mass, upon the week days, they are never, never to be seen. Any additional services, which are intended as further helps in the way towards Heaven, are never attended or valued by them. They try to measure out and weigh for themselves the very least that is demanded of them, and they satisfy themselves with paying that ungenerous tribute to a God who is so abundant in His proofs of love to them. If exhorted to greater fervour, they will argue in their own favour, that they break no commandments, and are complying with what God and His Church demand of them. Remember, my dear brethren, I am not accusing them of grievous sin for not doing what they are not bound to do under grievous sin. My argument is only this, and I do not wish to push it beyond this: there *is* a difference between them and those others who do avail themselves of helps which they also could use if they wished. They may fall back upon principles of faith and strict obedience: can they appeal to principles of love and zealous devotion? Is it love for God which makes them so limited in their manifestation of fervour towards Him? Which shows the greater love for God: one who is assiduous in using every opportunity of showing that love, or one who is content with doing the least possible in return for all that has been done for him?

Then with regard to the Sacraments: some approach them but rarely, tepidly, and with repugnance. Their Easter duties, perhaps, are complied with, in some way or another. And then a whole year is allowed to pass away, before the burden comes to press upon them again. Do they believe that Sacraments are not merely articles of faith, but that they are practices of love and devotion? How do these indevout souls guard themselves, in the midst of the dangers and temptations of the world, against all the assaults that are made upon them? Frequent Communion is an antidote against the poison of the world. What about those who drink down the poison for a whole year, and take the antidote

only when it is forced upon them, rarely and reluctantly? They argue, that they are not bound to receive the Sacraments more frequently than is expressed in the positive precepts of the Church. Be it so. Sacraments are great opportunities: and all that I am urging at present is, that some persons avail themselves frequently of these aids, and they but as seldom as possible. Is it not the case that the same opportunity has a very different result in different cases?

Again: is the continual presence of our dearest Lord in the Blessed Sacrament ever thought of by these unloving souls? Except when forced into His presence by a command which they cannot resist, they avoid Him, and He remains to them an utter stranger. Alas! that it should be so: but is it not so? Where is the faith and love of those who despise such an opportunity?

And with regard to the instructions which are given by God's own messengers, His ministers, whom He commissions to sound the note of warning when it is required, and to keep the thoughts of eternity before the minds of His people, how completely are they disregarded! And in consequence of this neglect, how many graces are lost, and sins committed against which, if forewarned, they would have been forearmed also!

What a contrast, then, is there not between these cold and careless members of the Church, and those first ones whose fervour and earnestness we have considered. I am not supposing grievous omissions or wilful sins; but can they be well left out of consideration? Is it not probable that many grievous sins and negligences are committed, when securities against them are rejected and despised? For, if those who remain faithful and fervent feel that it is necessary for them to be very watchful and to use every opportunity that is offered them in order to persevere, what can we think of those who are listless and indolent, and let every opportunity pass by unheeded and unused?

I am not condemning, my dear brethren. I am giving a warning, and am stating the fact that there is a difference in result, where circumstances are the same. And at the Day of Judgment, when a separation will take place, and there will be a difference in the eternal fate of the elect and the reprobate, the difference will be found to depend not upon the fact that some had opportunities and graces which others had not, but that some were faithful and prudent, and true to their dearest interests, and others were not so. If we wish the difference on that day to be in our favour, let us use well the helps and graces which are now within our reach; for everything depends, not upon the opportunities, but upon the use that is made of them.

SERMON L.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE B.V.M.

Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken from her.

The solemnity of the Assumption of the ever-blessed Virgin Mary is the greatest of all the Festivals celebrated by the Church in honour of this most holy and privileged of the creatures of God. And it is most fitting that it should be so. For on this day we celebrate the completion of the work of God in regard of one whom He had so highly favoured and honoured. And if, in the case of other Saints, it is usual to commemorate, as the great fact of their existence, that of their death and their entrance into their eternal home of happiness—the end of their life in this world, and the commencement of that eternal life for which this had been a preparation—so should it be in regard to her who is the first and greatest amongst the Saints, called, as all others were, to know, love, and serve God here, and to be happy with Him hereafter.

In inviting us to consider the glory of our Lady's Assumption, the Church selects the Gospel which records the fact of our Blessed Lord having been received to hospitality by Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus. And in the Communion of the Mass she applies to the holy Mother of God the concluding words of the Gospel, those which I have selected for our text: *Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken from her.* Our Lord addressed these words to Martha, as a justification of the conduct of Mary Magdalene, who reposed at His Feet, and did nothing but listen to His words, whilst Martha herself *was busy about much serving*. His own Mother had, indeed, done both offices to Him. She had received Him into her own home, even into her own womb, when she gave her consent to the message of the Angel, and the Word was made Flesh, and began to dwell amongst us. She had ministered actively and more perseveringly than Martha, when she watched over Him and attended to all His wants in Bethlehem and Nazareth. But another privilege had also been hers. She was always at His side, receiving proofs of His love, listening to His words, and

obeying every intimation of His Will. And so, when once a woman in the crowd exclaimed : *Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the breasts that nourished Thee*, our Lord, not in depreciation of His Mother, but as an additional cause for praising her, added : *Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*[1] She was blessed, because it was true she had thus ministered to Him ; but she was additionally blessed, because she had always been so faithful in doing the Will of her God.

Upon earth Almighty God had chosen for her the best part that had ever been given to a creature : the highest honour and the most privileged office of which a creature is capable : the part, the honour, the office of the Divine Maternity, She accepted the office with all its responsibilities, and most faithfully discharged it. Its honour never shall be taken from her ; and the joy of the Church upon the day of her Assumption is a proof of this. What the Church means by the Assumption is the taking up into Heaven of the body, as well as the soul, of the glorious Mother of God. Her death, her resurrection, her being taken up into Heaven, and her coronation as Queen of Saints and Angels, are all combined in the solemnity of this day. For it is a venerable tradition of the Church that, the Blessed Mother of our Lord having remained upon earth many years after the Ascension of her Son, and having watched over the early struggles of the Church, at last submitted to that law of death from which even her Son was not exempt : that speedily after her death, her soul was again reunited with her body, and that she was assumed into Heaven, and there crowned with glory and honour, as a privilege due to her because of her exceptional and most intimate connexion with the Incarnate Word. Her Immaculate Conception was a fitting privilege because of her Maternity, and her Assumption was fitting for the same reason. The Assumption, indeed, is the complement of the Immaculate Conception ; and the same reasons may be alleged for one as for the other. The Festival which we are celebrating is quite a sufficient guarantee for the patronage of the Church over such a tradition ; and it is in a conformity of spirit with her that we celebrate this solemnity with the joy which the Church both commands and inspires.

I. To whom is this a day of joy and glory ?

It is such, first of all, to the Eternal Father. For she, whose glory we are celebrating, was undoubtedly the one chosen by Himself, and appointed, in His eternal decrees, to be the Mother upon earth to Him, to Whom He was the Father in Heaven. It

[1] Luke xi. 27, 28.

was not by chance that Jesus was *born of the Virgin Mary*. It was decreed that it should be so. And when *in the beginning of the book* of the decrees of God, as St. Paul argues,[2] it was written that the Only-begotten Son of the Father should come upon earth to do the Will of that Father, a Body had to be fitted for Him, and a Body, as the same St. Paul elsewhere tells us, *made of a Woman*.[3] She was, therefore, predestined to be the Mother of Jesus. And if, as the holy Apostle declares, *those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son*,[4] we have a principle affirmed by which we are obliged to admit the privilege of one who was exceptionally predestinated, and whose conformity to Him was also, on that account, exceptional. The Holy Spirit also, coöperating with the Eternal Father, overshadowed the Virgin-Mother when the fulness of the time was come; and Both, therefore, rejoice and receive glory in the event of the Assumption of her, who was so closely associated with the Mystery designed before the foundation of the world, in order to promote that glory and to satisfy its claims.

To the Incarnate Word, seated at the right hand of the Father, this must have been most directly an event of joy. His Flesh, which had entered Heaven on the day of the admirable Ascension, had been formed from that which now enters on the day of the Assumption. How would not such a Son welcome such a Mother upon the completion of her course upon earth, and her admission to the throne of glory prepared for her next to His own! Now is fulfilled what the Psalmist has described in one of his beautiful songs of praise. For after addressing to the Eternal Son words which St. Paul authoritatively interprets as being applied to Him: *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of justice is the sceptre of Thy kingdom*,[5] he adds, *The Queen stood on Thy right hand, in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety*. What a generous compensation does not He make to her for all that she had borne upon earth for His sake! The Glory of His Sacred Humanity was to be purchased at the price of the deepest humility. She had shared in His humiliations; now she is admitted to a never-ending share in His Glory. Never could the words of the spouse in the Canticles find a fitter application than this day suggests, when He comes forward to welcome her into the home prepared for her: *Arise, make haste, my beautiful one, and come. For the winter is now past: the rain is over and gone. . . . Arise, and come*.[6]

And the happy Angels, welcoming her as their Queen, go

[2] Heb. x. 7. [3] Gal. iv. 4. [4] Rom. viii. 29.
[5] Ps. xliv., quoted Heb. i. 8. [6] Cant. ii. 10.

forth to meet her, and in glad procession escort her upon her entrance into the kingdom, in which they are always ministering and singing their joyous hymns. To them the Mystery of the Incarnation had been a source of glory, and the reason of their confirmation in the grace in which they had been created. Long before the accomplishment of this Mystery, they had known that it had been decreed ;[7] for St. Paul tells us that it had *appeared unto the Angels*.[8] When it was to be announced upon earth, and made known to her who was to act so prominent a part in its fulfilment, Gabriel had been their spokesman. He had first of all foretold it to Daniel : had prepared the father of the Baptist for his more remote, and the Mother for her more immediate, connexion with the Incarnation. At the time of the Birth of our Lord they had sung the *Gloria in excelsis* over the crib of Bethlehem, and drew the shepherds to go and pay their homage to the newly-born Saviour. And now, when they see her whom in Bethlehem they had seen in such poverty, coming forth from the desert of the earth to take possession of her throne, we can conceive how Gabriel's salutation was repeated by them in the fullest jubilation : *Hail, Full of Grace ! Blessed art thou amongst women.* Angels could not have allowed the earth to possess such a treasure as the body from which was formed His Who had brought such glory to them ; they envied it, and so they carry it off triumphantly amid their songs of joy. This the Church commemorates in the Liturgy of to-day, when in the Introit she bids us all rejoice in the Lord, whilst we are celebrating the festival in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for whose Assumption the Angels rejoice and praise the Son of God.

The Saints too, who had already been admitted to their reward, come forth with the Angels to welcome her, whom they salute with all those queenly titles which we love to give to her in her Litany. Patriarchs and prophets who had foretold her glory witness it to-day. Apostles, who had known her upon earth, who had by her been encouraged and blessed upon their entrance on their missionary labours, and many of whom probably had preceded her by martyrdom, and had accomplished their course, come and join in the chorus of salutation and welcome. And upon each Anniversary, whilst the Church upon earth is celebrating her Festival, we can conceive how the Church Triumphant joins in the solemnity. Thousands of Martyrs, Confessors, and Virgins, who in the days of their probation had been so effectually helped by her patronage, unite in praising her ; and in their acts of thanksgiving they acknowledge what she had gained for them, and how she had

[7] S. Thom. i. q. 117, 2 ad 1. [8] 1 Tim. iii. 16.

helped them on in their struggles for the reward which they are now enjoying with her.

And what reason has not the Church Militant to enter into the full spirit of this glorious solemnity! It is she who, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has instituted this Festival in honour of the first and highest of the Saints whom she has sent to Heaven. She who has been taken up into that kingdom of glory was once one of her own. She belongs to her even now, though in a higher state, for the Militant and Triumphant Church is but one, though the state of each differs. In her instance the Church upon earth boasts with reason, that she has produced a holier creature than could have been found amongst the Angelic Choirs. Whilst then the Church is rejoicing in the victory which she celebrates to-day, we must join with her, for we belong to her, and are her children and members. Others know nothing of this day. They are as ignorant of it as were the Jews and other unbelievers of the event when it actually occurred. But we few, we happy few, to whom is known by the teaching of the Church what is hidden from others, must rejoice on the occurrence of a Festival, on which we commemorate the triumph of one who is the glory of the Church, and the most exalted amongst the daughters of Eve. She is our own Mother also; for she is the Mother of Him Who, in becoming man, became a brother to us, and Who, when about to die, bequeathed us as children to her, and bade her to be a Mother to us. This is, therefore, to us a Festival of great joy.

To herself, also, the happy subject of this solemnity, what a joy and glory was the event of her Assumption! The time of sorrow and of deferred hope had come to its end. Sorrow was to be turned into joy, and hope was to be rewarded by possession. We might imagine how at the admirable Ascension of her Son, she might have expostulated as St. Laurence the Martyr did with his holy master St. Xystus, and have exclaimed: 'Whither, my Son, goest Thou without Thy Mother? Never didst Thou suffer or labour without my sharing Thy anxieties and pains. Have I been an unworthy Mother? Did I neglect Thee in Bethlehem, abandon Thee in Egypt, treat Thee with want of love in Nazareth? Did I even forsake Thee upon Calvary in the hours of Thy greatest anguish? Do not abandon me, but grant me to follow Thee quickly into Thy kingdom.' But we may imagine something higher than this; and the fact of her having remained upon earth, as tradition tells us, some twenty years after the Ascension,[9] assures us of the noble act of self-sacrifice made by

[9] Darras critically fixes the date of the Assumption to be about A.D. 54: the B.V.M. being then aged 63. Vol. vi. p. 27.

her in behalf of the infant Church. No heart can ever have yearned for union with the object of its love, more than hers to be with her Son. But if it was His wish that she should continue upon earth, to discharge the office with which, under such sacred circumstances, she had been invested when, in the person of St. John, the whole Church was placed under her Maternity, it was enough for her. Better remain upon earth, if He willed it, than enter Heaven before the time fixed in His decrees. She could not be outstripped in generosity by any Saint; and therefore she could not have had less devotedness to her work than St. Martin. With that patriarchal Saint she may well have addressed her Son, as she offered herself to do His bidding: 'If I am still necessary to Thy people, I do not refuse the labour: Thy will be done!'

But the years rolled on, and the day of her glory at last arrived. In an ecstasy of love, her soul passed away, and appeared before her Son. She is at once rewarded by her Resurrection. The flesh of such a holy one is not to be allowed to see corruption. Once more the soul inhabits its corporal abode, and her living body is carried by Angels into its eternal home. It was again an occasion for her to chant her Magnificat, when she entered a dwelling so far more holy than the humble house of Elizabeth. *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He hath had regard to the lowliness of His handmaid; from henceforth, therefore, shall all generations call me blessed. He that is mighty hath done great things unto me: and Holy is His Name.* Well might all the choir of Heaven answer in the words which we are considering: *Mary hath chosen the best part.* It is given and confirmed to her to-day; *and it never shall be taken from her.*

II. But, my dear brethren, the Assumption of our Blessed Lady is not to be considered only as a fact of glory to her. It also contains its lesson to us. Though we never can arrive at an equal glory with the sacred Mother of God, one truth we learn from her glory, and it is that practical and important truth which faith is always bringing home to us: namely, that the glory of Heaven is a reward, and is bestowed upon those only who have fulfilled the condition for its attainment. Mary had her duties, as well as her privileges. And if she has now been crowned with such splendour, it has been not merely on account of her privileges, but because of her faithful discharge of the duties which those privileges implied. It was a great privilege, and the highest of which any creature is capable, to be the Mother of the Incarnate Word. But the Maternity was not an

idle irresponsible office. To be Mother to the Man of Sorrows implied that she must have been the Mother of Sorrows. The venerable Simeon affirmed this principle, when on the day of the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple, he foretold the contradictions which were to befall the Son, and were therefore to affect the Mother, and to pierce her soul with a sword of grief. As our Blessed Lord first humbled Himself, became obedient, and suffered, and then entered into His Glory, so His Mother, who was to share His Glory, was destined first of all to share in His humiliations and sufferings. What St. Paul tells us is required of the sons of God was required of His Mother also: yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him.[10]

You know that the Church, which is to-day so full of joy because of the glory of the Assumption, has instituted Festivals also, and encourages devotional practices, in honour of the seven chief sorrows of the ever-blessed Virgin. And she wishes us to-day to remember the fact of these sorrows, in order to see how great has been the compensation made for them, and that *the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come*,[11] which has been revealed in her.

And the triumphant Queen of Heaven laboured also. Our Lord always had His work to do, so had she. The last verse of the book of Proverbs in which the wise man concludes his panegyric of the valiant woman was verified in her case: *Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates;* for it is as she enters into Heaven that these works are recited, and praise bestowed because of their faithful performance. The great work of every Christian is to coöperate with the Grace of God, which is given to us through the Incarnation. She who was exceptionally and most intimately connected with this Mystery, received through it an exceptional abundance of Grace. And it was through her fidelity to this Grace, that she, Virgin most faithful, as the Church calls her, acquired that merit which has now been so gloriously rewarded. As the life of her Son was a life of labour, and He had fulfilled what had prophetically been declared of Him: *I am poor and in labours from my youth*,[12] so must hers have been a life, certainly not of indolence but of patient toil. Though by birth a royal Princess, and Mother to Him who by descent was the legitimate heir to the sceptre of Juda, she submitted gladly to the life of labour imposed upon her, and shared all the privations of Him, *who having joy set before Him, endured the Cross*.[13] The Assumption, therefore,

[10] Rom. viii. 17. [11] Ibid. viii. 18. [12] Ps. lxxxvii. [13] Heb. xii. 2.

teaches us how willing we ought to be to labour and to suffer, seeing the example given by Mother and Son, both of whom purchased their glory by means from which we are too apt to shrink through indolence and timidity.

She is crowned, then, to-day with a diadem which was the reward of fidelity. What an encouragement and incentive to us to labour also for our future reward! Heaven can be ours if we only imitate the example which her Son, herself, and all the Saints have set us. Heaven has been bestowed upon others, because they fulfilled the condition for attaining to it: we must not expect the attainment if we neglect the condition. Nor will her intercession be wanting to aid the influence of her example. We are her children, and as we rejoice at her glory because she is our Mother, she for the same reason will rejoice at our fidelity, and will help us to be faithful. Final perseverance, the greatest of all gifts, that which alone is crowned, is what we must ask with confidence through her. 'Now, and at the hour of our death,' are very familiar words to us. We use them often, perhaps scarcely with the earnest spirit in which we ought to use them. May she who ascends to-day triumphantly, having laboured and having persevered, obtain fidelity for us now, and perseverance even till the hour of our death! Then will the best part which Mary chose for herself be bestowed upon us; and what through her prayers we shall have gained, will under her patronage, through the abundant generosity of God, be so secured as never to be taken from us.

SERMON LI.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE GIFT OF DIVINE GRACE.

By the Grace of God I am what I am.

THE words of the holy Apostle St. Paul, with which the Epistle of this Sunday concludes, express a principle of the deepest importance, and convey a truth which ought to be constantly borne in mind by every Christian. It is not what we appear in the eyes of the world which really constitutes our greatness. It is not the accidental natural perfections which we may possess that ought to be a subject of congratulation, or whose absence or loss should occasion our regret. It is not even the gifts conferred upon as the 'lords of the creation,' as men are proud to style themselves, being the first and highest upon earth amongst the creatures of God, which form the fittest motive and object for our thanksgiving to the Giver of all that is good. For, we are subjects of something greater than what the world can see, and something nobler than all that nature can supply; and we can and ought to show that it is Grace alone we really esteem, and that it is this divine gift which forms the test and measure of our perfection. Our expression ought to be that of St. Paul's: *By the Grace of God I am what I am.*

Let me to-day invite you to a consideration of this noble reality, that you may see its value and importance, and may learn practically the lessons it suggests. You have as much right even as St. Paul: nay, it is your duty, as it was his, to declare that it is only by the Grace of God you are anything at all. The same good God who dealt with that holy Apostle, who called, sanctified, supported, encouraged, and rewarded him, has called, and is sanctifying, and is ready to reward you. He was, indeed, a wonderful instance of the power of Divine Grace. He had begun ill: his antecedents were so unpromising: he had persecuted the Church of God, and, therefore, confesses his unworthiness of being called an Apostle. But what a sudden and complete

change comes over him! In one moment we see him under the influence of a misdirected enthusiasm breathing fury against the disciples of Christ, and in the next moment prostrate on the ground, and calling out to that same Christ: *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?* And what caused this great change? We read in the history of his conversion, that *a light from Heaven shined round about him, . . and he heard a voice speaking to him.* This was the working of Divine Grace: it was this which changed him, even him who had been instrumental in putting to death many besides St. Stephen, from a persecutor into an Apostle. And so he says: *By the Grace of God I am what I am.*

What is it that we mean by Divine Grace? We will take God's view of this gift: and then study what is our duty in its regard.

I. You know, my dear brethren, that we have been made by Almighty God not only for a natural end, but for something far higher than that. We have a natural end; and in order that we may be able to fulfil it, we have received from our Creator the natural gifts necessary for its fulfilment. Health, strength, activity, power of endurance, the use of our senses: these are amongst those natural gifts bestowed upon us, in order that we may, like the rest of God's creatures upon earth, do that for which He has designed us, and fill up a part of the work of creation. But unlike and above others of these creatures, we have also a supernatural end, not being made only for this world, but that we may fit ourselves here below for a future life, of which this upon earth is but a preparation and a prelude. At the same time that we are dealing with outward visible things, by means of our natural gifts, we are dealing, and are bound to deal, with higher invisible realities, by means of gifts which are above nature—supernatural gifts. It is our duty to know our Creator, to love Him, and to serve Him; and by these three duties we are preparing for the everlasting possession of Him hereafter. Thus, then, as without natural gifts we cannot do what is required of us, in order to attain to our natural end, so without supernatural gifts we cannot attain to our supernatural end, which is the possession of God.

Divine Grace, which we are now considering, and of which St. Paul speaks in the words of our text, implies that internal help freely bestowed upon us by God for our sanctification and salvation. By this gift we are made well-pleasing in His sight, and in this sense we speak of sanctifying or *habitual* Grace. And by it we are aided in the pursuance of good and the avoidance of evil, are enabled to perform acts which are acceptable to God, and meritorious of eternal life; and in this sense we call it *actual*

Grace. When in one place St. Paul says to the Corinthians: *Know you not that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*[1] he is speaking of habitual Grace. When elsewhere he speaks, as to the Philippians, of Grace moving and helping us to act: *It is God who worketh in you to will and to perfect*,[2] he is speaking of actual Grace.

As God and eternity surpass the world and time, so does Divine Grace surpass all natural gifts and perfections, however great they may be. And, therefore, the highest orders of creatures have been created in a state of Grace. The blessed Angels surrounding the throne of God, singing His praises, and ministering to Him: these holy spirits were created in a state of Grace, and continue in it. Our first parents, being created for a supernatural end, the possession of God, were endowed by their Creator not only with all the natural gifts fitted for their state in this world, but He superadded holiness and justice, and constituted them in a state of sanctifying Grace. It was the privilege of the Blessed Virgin Mary to have been exempt from the stain of sin, which our first parents by their disobedience contracted for themselves, and transmitted to their descendants. They lost their original Grace by sin, and we have been conceived and born, through their act, in a state of sin, not of Grace. From this taint she was preserved, and was conceived and born in a state of Grace. When the Angel Gabriel came to announce to her her future Divine Maternity, he pronounced her panegyric in the words: *Hail, full of Grace!* And our dearest Saviour, who was born of her, was always, what St. John in his Gospel tells us he had seen Him to be, *full of Grace and truth.*

I have said that through the fall of our first parents sin came into the world, and the consequent evil has fallen upon their descendants that we are all born in a state of sin. But by the great Mystery of the Incarnation man has been restored to Grace. For we *have been bought at a great Price*,[3] and *when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the Death of His Son*.[4] It is through the Sacraments, which are channels of Grace, that this reconciliation is personally applied to us, and that Grace is preserved and increased within us. Though we are born in sin, Baptism enables us to be born again, and through water and the Holy Ghost we are regenerated in a state of Grace. *As many of you as have been baptised in Christ*, says St. Paul, *have put on Christ*.[5] The reward of prayer, also, is an increase and a more effectual preservation of Grace. The great anxiety of the Church

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 16. [2] Phil. ii. 13. [3] 1 Cor. vi. 20.
[4] Rom. v. 10. [5] Gal. iii. 27.

in regard to her children is that they should have a due appreciation of this Divine gift: that, therefore, they should attend to the Sacraments, practise prayer, and adopt every means for treasuring up this greatest blessing of the Grace of God. For this end it has been that Apostles have given up home and friends and everything, in order to convey to distant nations their message of peace. Rather than sacrifice this blessing, Martyrs have bravely faced every kind of persecution, and have gladly shed their blood. Holy Virgins, fearing that the world might succeed in robbing them of this treasure, have fled from its vanities, and have passed lives of silence and retirement. It is over the loss of this ornament of the soul that penitents have wept, and have sighed in their anguish for its more thorough restoration.

Upon the presence or the absence of Divine Grace depends the difference between a saint and a reprobate. Those who here below are in a state of Grace, are friends of God and Temples of the Holy Ghost. God looks upon them with love, and sees in them that which is pleasing in His sight and in accordance with His will. But from one who is out of the state of Grace, who is in wilful grievous sin, God turns with an angry look; for He sees not the beauty with which He had adorned that soul, when at one time He had enriched it with this greatest of His gifts. And in the two abodes of eternity, the same difference which had begun to show itself in this world is fixed and perpetuated. Heaven is the everlasting home of souls which have departed this life in Grace. Hell is the prison of souls which have been found at the time of death in a state of grievous sin. How different is the language both here and hereafter of souls accordingly as they are in one of these states or the other! Conscious of its happiness and its peace, one looks up with confiding joy to the Giver of every good gift, and in a spirit of thanksgiving exclaims: *By the Grace of God I am what I am, and in me His Grace hath not been void.* The other, cast away by God, with the thorn of sin and remorse fastened within it, cries out in sorrow: By the Grace of God I could have been and I ought to be, what, miserably and unfortunately, I am not.

It is the presence of this Divine gift in a soul which constitutes in it its most perfect resemblance to Almighty God. For what God says of Himself, a soul in such a state can say of itself. When He would give a definition of Himself, He used that solemn description which He spoke through Moses: I AM WHO AM.[6] And such a soul using the word Grace, says: *By Grace, I am what I am.* Grace is, therefore, everything to us. It is that

[6] Exod. iii. 14.

treasure of which our Blessed Lord speaks in one of His parables, which, when a man has found hidden in a field, he gives up everything in order to purchase and secure it. Of this gift, and its absolute necessity, He also speaks when He says: *Without Me you can do nothing*;[7] and to this St. Paul alludes when he says: *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything, but our sufficiency is from God.*[8] With this help the soul is endowed with a kind of omnipotence, and well it may be, because it is not itself that acts, but an all-powerful God who acts within it. It was the secret of St. Paul's earnestness and confidence. Nothing could break down his noble spirit, because he knew the power that was within him. He begs at one time to be freed from some infirmity, a sting of the flesh which was given to him to buffet and humble him, and the answer to his petition is: *My Grace is sufficient for thee.*[9] At another time he enumerates his labours in behalf of a cause which he had once persecuted, and after stating that he had laboured more abundantly than others, he gives the reason of his perseverance: *Yet not I, but the Grace of God with me.*[10] And again he says: *I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.*[11]

II. Such, then, is the gift of Divine Grace: such is God's view, and such ought to be ours. What, now, is our duty in regard to this gift? It may be summed up in one word: Fidelity. We must be faithful to Grace. What is said of our Blessed Lady in her Litany ought, in our measure, to be said of us. She is called Mother of Divine Grace; but she is also called Virgin most Faithful. She was Mother of Divine Grace, because by her Maternity she brought into the world Him who is the Author of Grace, and hence she herself was full of Grace. But she had her duties, as we have: and the Church declares her fulfilment of these duties in that other title which proclaims her fidelity. We have seen the importance and necessity of this gift, viewed either as sanctifying or as actual Grace. But necessary as it is, still something is required upon our part in order that it may produce its result. We must be faithful in guarding and in coöperating with it. For it can be lost; and, unless zealously watched over, it will be lost.

God wishes the salvation of our soul to be the result of the joint labour of Himself and ourselves. He wishes us to be saved; and it is really He who does save us, and therefore there is given to our Blessed Lord the glorious Name of JESUS, or Saviour. But He wishes also that we should do something towards our

[7] John xv. 5. [8] 2 Cor. iii. 5. [9] Ibid. xii. 9.
[10] 1 Cor. xv. 10. [11] Phil. iv. 13.

own salvation, and that something is, coöperating faithfully with the graces which He bestows upon us. Thus is generated merit, which is the joint product of Divine Grace and man's coöperation. Glory, which is the reward conferred upon those who are saved, is the recompense of this merit. This is the moral which is enforced by that parable of our Blessed Lord's,[12] in which He tells us of the nobleman who gave a sum of money to each of his servants to trade with on his behalf. To each of those who made profit for him out of their share, he gives a generous reward; but to one, who had not squandered away his share, but had been idle and had not put it out to profit, had not laboured with it and made it produce an increase, he addresses himself in terms of angry rebuke: he calls him a wicked servant, and takes from him the sum that he had committed to his keeping.

God has given to us our free-will, which is one of the features of our soul in which it resembles Himself. By His Grace He does not force that will to act in spite of itself. He moves it, He directs it, He acts with it, and enables it to do what of itself it could not do; but still He leaves it free, and requires its free coöperation with Him, in order that His Grace may have its result. Wonderful nature of this power of our soul! Its seat is in the heart, and it is for this reason that God is so jealous of our hearts: they are the great fellow labourers with Him in the cause of our perfection. And however difficult it may be to account in theory for the freedom of the action of the will under the influence of Divine Grace, this at least we know and understand. We know that we are free: we understand that we have the power to resist and to refuse our assent to the dictates of grace. We know that life and death are set before us for our choice, and that though Almighty God wishes us to choose life, for He desires not the death of a sinner, yet we can make the other choice, and prefer what is to our ruin.

There are various ways in which we may be wanting in our fidelity to Grace, and may abuse this gift or receive it in vain. And, first of all, we abuse it and are unfaithful to it, when we cast it off by a deliberate act of grievous sin. Such was that awful act, so awful in its consequences to them and to us, of our first parents, when they wilfully disobeyed a command imposed upon them under such fearful penalties. In the moment in which they consented to the tempter, and did with full deliberation and with a clear knowledge of the consequences, what they had been so solemnly fordidden to do by their God, they passed from a state of Grace into a state of grievous sin. They lost at once

[12] Luke xix.

the holiness and justice in which they had been created, and which they had preserved until then. They incurred the displeasure and anger of God, and became deteriorated in the gifts of soul and body. The threat was realised there and then. *In what day soever thou shalt eat, thou shalt die.* As to the soul, they both died at that moment; because mortal sin is the death of the soul. And as to the body, it received then its mortal wound: death set in at that moment, and they only lingered on faintly and feebly, until it came at last to claim what that day had become its right. Well might Almighty God, after such a change, when He summoned Adam before Him to rebuke him for his infidelity to Grace, call to him and say: *Adam! where art thou?* For the noblest feature of Adam was no longer about him, and he ceased to be what he had been before. Where is that image and likeness of Myself, might God say, which I impressed upon thee upon the day of thy creation? How distorted and changed is everything about thee! Earth sees upon its surface now, something which I never placed there. My office of Creator has been interfered with: the man, the Adam, that I made was in a state of Grace: that which I now see before Me is in sin, and is no longer Mine. Adam! where art thou? and what hast thou become? Awful, my dear brethren, as was that change, it is what we cause in ourselves, whenever we perform the act, which by our free will we can perform, and pass from a state of Grace into the dreadful state of mortal sin.

Another way in which we are unfaithful to Grace, is by refusing to coöperate with it, resisting its influence when we feel it working within our soul. To resist the inspirations of God is to question His wisdom and goodness. It is an act of preferring our own will to His, and setting up our judgment against what He declares to be best for us. Why does God give us an inspiration, except that He wishes us to follow it? If He speaks to our soul, He wishes to be heard and obeyed, else He would not speak. The Jews who rejected so many repeated inspirations, are an instance of the fatal consequence of such resistance. How fearfully does that act read, which is recorded of St. Paul and St. Barnabas turning away in utter despair from the Jews of Antioch of Pisidia! *To you it behoved us first to speak the word of God; but because you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we turn to the Gentiles.*[13] And these two Apostles, who had been so patient and earnest in preaching and labouring amongst them, shake the dust off their feet against them, leave the Jews and go to preach to the Gentiles.

[13] Acts xiii. 46.

Unfaithfulness to Grace is also shown by that act into which the evil spirit so constantly tries to lead us, of deferring our obedience. This is an act which really implies a denial upon our part of the meaning of Grace, and of its source. Grace is a free gift of God: He gives it when He wills, and to whom He wills. It does not follow, because He offers it to-day, that He will offer it to us to-morrow. It is not we who are the source of Grace, as if we could command it and give it to ourselves. We have an example of this delay and playing, as it were, with Divine Grace in the case of Felix the governor of Cesarea. He had had the privilege, which St. Chrysostom said would have been one of the wishes of his life, of hearing St. Paul preach. And when by the voice of the Apostle he was terrified at the thought of the judgment to come, instead of at once acting up to the inspiration which was vouchsafed to him, his answer is: *For this time go thy way; but when I have a convenient time I will send for thee.*[14] For him the day of Grace passed away without fruit, for we read not of his ever having been converted. So may it be with any of us. If when Almighty God, through the voice of the Church, awakens us to a sense of our duty, and calls us to supply for negligences for which our conscience reproaches us, we put off to a more convenient time what we ought to do at once, we are guilty of unfaithfulness, and are abusing the Grace of God.

This abuse of Grace is punished oftentimes here below by God's giving to us fewer graces. We have not appreciated what He has given: why should He continue to expose His precious gifts to further abuse? It is owing to this withdrawal of Grace, that the transition becomes so easy from venial to mortal sin. If we hope to be faithful under greater temptations, we must show fidelity on lesser occasions. And the punishment follows us into the next world, by a diminution of Glory if we are saved, or by its total loss and an increase of punishment if unfortunately we are cast away. Our graces will form a matter for our future judgment; and we certainly shall have to answer for the use we have made of these treasures of God.

Without flattering ourselves, and at the same time without discouraging ourselves, let us ask ourselves: What has been the case? What is the case? and what will be the case? The case *has been* this. We have had graces. There was a time, each of us may say, when I was an angel, because through the Grace of God, I was His friend, and the light of His countenance shone upon me. Had I died in such a state, I could have been and I

[14] Acts xxiv. 25.

should have been in Heaven, because Heaven is the home of souls in Grace. The case *is* this: perhaps, at least, it is. I have fallen away from God. I am not what I used to be: I am not what, by the Grace of God, I ought to be. What *will be* the case? I can be more faithful for the future, and I will be so. I can *redeem the time*,[15] as St. Paul bids me, and supply by greater care for past unfaithfulness. I will be more attentive to the Sacraments: more regular about prayer: more cautious about occasions of sin: more humble and confiding towards God.

If it is true, as it is beyond doubt, that our salvation is to be the joint work of God and ourselves, His Graces and our co-operation, who is to blame if we fail? Not God, certainly; but ourselves. Who is to suffer if we fail? Not God, but ourselves. And what are we to suffer if we fail? The loss of glory hereafter, just because we have wilfully lost Grace here below. Let us be up, then, and be active. We have a work to do, but we can do it. God and ourselves can succeed. He is always faithful and true. All that is required is that we should be faithful and true also. Then all will be well; and the same God who enables us now to say: *By the Grace of God I am what I am*, will at our future judgment call upon us to add in a spirit of thanksgiving: *His Grace in me hath not been void.*

[15] Eph. v. 16; Col. iv. 5.

SERMON LII.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

Who is my neighbour?

THIS important and practical question is the soul and centre of the beautiful Gospel of this Sunday. It was suggested to a tempter of our dear Lord by that law of love, which was quoted as comprising the whole will of God; and in its turn it suggested to our Lord Himself that most impressive of all His Parables, the Good Samaritan. Both the question and the instruction are worthy of our best attention. For to ask seriously, Who is my neighbour? implies that we desire to know a great leading principle of the Christian faith. And the answer given to the question by the Parable, teaches very effectually what that principle is, and how it is to be carried out in practice.

We will first of all listen to the Gospel narrative, and then put the question and attend to its answer.

I. The Gospel of the Sunday commences with words of comforting congratulation, addressed by our Divine Redeemer, to the seventy-two disciples whom He had just chosen, and who had returned to Him after their first entrance upon the work for which He had appointed them. Great indeed was the blessing which had been reserved for them. What kings and prophets had longed to see and hear, but had not seen and heard, was enjoyed by them. The time of deferred hope, which sickeneth the soul, was now at an end, and Heaven had sent down its richest treasure upon earth. Many knew not who it was that stood in the midst of them; but these disciples did know Him. Their eyes, like Simeon's, had seen their salvation. They had received instructions and a personal blessing from Him, whose coming the Prophets had foretold, and whose future royal dignity had shed lustre by anticipation upon His predecessors upon the throne of Juda. And with good reason, therefore, He says to these privileged disciples: *Blessed are the eyes which see the*

things which you see. For I say to you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them.

Such a declaration might well tempt others to desire a share in the blessing enjoyed by these favoured ones. And therefore a question is asked, which we in the best spirit might desire to ask and to have answered: *What am I to do to gain eternal life?* A question, indeed, of vital importance: one which it behoves us to ask of God; because it implies a desire to gain that eternal life for which we have been created, and a desire also to adopt the necessary means. Our Lord answers by questioning the one who inquired of Him, as to his knowledge of the law already revealed to him. Then is quoted the law of twofold love, of God and our neighbour: a law which, if observed, is sure to gain for its followers the desired reward.

But the Sacred Heart of our dear Lord, burning to say more, suggested to His inquirer to ask the important question: *Who is my neighbour?* Just as a mother wishing to instruct her child, or a master when giving instruction to a pupil, wishes to have questions asked, inasmuch as it is a proof of a desire for further information in a matter of interest. The question is asked, and then follows the most beautiful Parable of the Good Samaritan. The Parable is directly applicable to our Blessed Lord Himself, although that was not the immediate application which He then made of it. The law of charity to every one is what He Himself had so practically carried out in the Mystery of the Incarnation; and when, therefore, He urged the importance of this law upon His children, or upon those who questioned Him, He had a right to do so, having first of all taught by example what He inculcated so continually in His teaching.

The general interpretation of the Fathers[1] given of this Parable is, that by the traveller is meant Adam, and all mankind who in this world are travellers, *in viâ* as theologians and spiritual writers say, journeying on towards their true country and home, which is Heaven. The robbers who attack and wound the poor traveller are the evil spirits who led our first Parents, and too often lead us, into sin which brings with it such fearful consequences, and wounds our nature so dangerously and fatally. The Priest and the Levite, who saw the wounded man, but passed by without attempting to give relief, were the old Law and the Prophets, who saw mankind under the penalty of the fall, but could not raise him from his state of sorrow.

[1] See Cornelius à Lapide, in locum.

Then came the Good Samaritan, namely Christ Himself, to whom the Law and the Prophets had been precursors. He was moved with compassion at seeing the ruin which the devil had inflicted upon man by sin. He humbled himself, took up the wounded man, set him upon his own beast that he had been riding, and moved him into a place of shelter; just as our dearest Lord did, when He took upon Himself our infirmities, placed His own merits at our disposal, and gave us all the helps which are found in the ministry of the Church. For He leaves us under the care of the Church, which He authorises to act in His Name, and to give every help to us, until He come again to perfect the work which He has commenced in our regard.

Here, then, is a strong argument on the part of our Blessed Lord, who holds forth His own example, as to how we ought to act in regard to our neighbour, and as to who is our neighbour. Here is an illustration of that new commandment which He gave of loving our neighbour as He first loved us. By this were men to know who His disciples were, if they were found to have love one for another. By this He declares He will, when He comes to judge the world on the great accounting Day, pronounce who are to be with Him, and who separated from Him for all eternity. Of this law it is affirmed: *To love one's neighbour as oneself is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices.*[2] This lesson, learnt by themselves from its great Teacher, their own Master, the Apostles everywhere enforced; and in spreading the light of the Gospel throughout the world, they promulgated everywhere also the law of love for one's neighbour.

II. And now let us attend to the question and its answer: *Who is my neighbour?* The Parable cautions us against a not unusual fault of limiting the meaning of the word 'neighbour,' in its Christian sense. To whom is it not to be limited? First of all, it is not to be limited to ourselves. And although this is so perfectly obvious as to be a truism, yet it is by no means always admitted in practice. Some persons consult themselves so exclusively, that they scarcely admit that charity has any demands upon them as far as others are concerned. They carry out the principle that 'charity begins at home' to such an undue extent, that they make it end there also. The law is, that we must love our neighbour as we love ourselves; and, therefore, from the very fact that we love ourselves, and take care to satisfy ourselves in everything, we ought to love our neighbour and try to satisfy him also. If in everything we so far prefer ourselves, and consult our own comfort and convenience, as to be unwilling to make any

[2] Mark xii. 33.

sacrifice for others, how can we pretend to love our neighbour at all? Such as these deny that they have a neighbour, and therefore exclude themselves altogether from the operation of the law of charity.

Nor, again, is the term 'neighbour' to be limited to our relatives merely. Our first duty to neighbours is to those of our own household; and we have the authority of St. Paul that, *if any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*[3] Such, of course, is the fault of those who squander away in dissipation, and with dissolute companions, what they are bound to spend in the proper maintenance of their own family and dependents. But others are not to be excluded, especially when their wants are pressing, and it is in our power to relieve them. The Good Samaritan was a stranger to the wounded traveller. He does not inquire who he is: what is his relation and religion. It is enough for him that he is in grievous want, and that he himself has the means of relieving him. He is at once moved to compassion, and he does not satisfy himself that others ought to do what he may excuse himself from doing, but he applies his remedies, and shows by his generosity and large-heartedness, that with him the word 'neighbour' has an extensive and unlimited meaning.

And our friends and benefactors are not the only neighbours we have. Towards them we are drawn by natural affection and motives; but, as Christians, something more is required of us. Has not our Divine Lord expressly condemned those who thus limit their exercise of acts of charity and kindness? *If you love them that love you, what thanks are to you? for sinners also love those who love them. And if you do good to them that do good to you, what thanks are to you? for sinners also do this. And if you lend to them of whom you hope to receive, what thanks are to you? for sinners also lend to sinners, for to receive as much.*[4]

Our equals in society, or those whom we flatter ourselves sometimes to be such, are also not the ones to whom we are to confine ourselves in our duties to our neighbour. Worldly pride makes us hold up our heads haughtily, when there is a question of admitting those whom we regard as beneath us, to a share in our sympathy and deeds of compassion. We perhaps make a complimentary call upon one whom we know in society, if we hear that he is suffering from sickness or any other cause of sorrow: and it is well to do so. But it is not well to think that having done this, we have satisfied every duty which we owe to our neighbour, or

[3] 1 Tim. v. 8. [4] Luke vi. 32-34.

that what the polite usages of society demand is a sufficient substitute for what the law of brotherly love requires.

The word 'neighbour,' then, is not to be thus limited; for our Blessed Lord attaches to it a very extensive meaning; and in reply to the tempter's question, *Who is my neighbour?* He answers in our beautiful Parable, not by the words, but by the actions of the Good Samaritan. And if you want seriously to know who your neighbour is, be assured that every man without exception bears that title, and has claims upon you. Every one has at least negative claims, that is to say, you are not to exclude a single person from that general love which each one deserves as a fellow creature of God, made to His image and likeness, and capable equally with yourself of attaining to that eternal happiness for which he has been created. No one whatever, therefore, is to be excluded from the charity of our prayers; and when we say the Our Father, we are forbidden consciously to exclude a single individual from a share in the graces for which we are then petitioning. Nor are we allowed to exclude any person whatever from the general willingness which we ought always to have, to give assistance, should the occasion arise, to any one who is in extreme necessity, and whom it is in our power at that time to relieve.

I am not saying, my dear brethren, that every neighbour has an equal claim upon your charity. That is not the case. The law of brotherly love is a natural as well as a Divine law; and inasmuch as it is Divine, it does not contradict, but it exalts and directs the dictates of nature. There are some who by the natural law have greater claims upon us, and according to these claims a well-ordered charity is to be regulated, in regard to the objects towards which it is applied. There are two circumstances which naturally influence us in acts of compassion towards another. The first is the grievousness of the suffering: the second is the connexion we have with the sufferer. Grievousness of suffering naturally affects us; for we cannot help being much more moved to pity if we meet with a person reduced to the extremity of starvation, than if we see another who is merely suffering from want of comforts which are not essential. And the connexion we have with the sufferer naturally affects us also. Thus a mother will feel more acutely for the sufferings of her child, than a stranger will for one whom he has never known.

There are three degrees to be considered in greatness of suffering or necessity, and consequently in the claim upon our charity. *Extreme* necessity is the highest degree, and this implies a state of temporal or spiritual danger of death or of the loss of

the soul, which calls for immediate relief. *Grievous* necessity, which is less than that which is extreme, implies a great danger, temporal or spiritual, which cannot be surmounted without great difficulty. *Ordinary* necessity implies a state of temporal or spiritual suffering or danger, which may be borne with or overcome without such great difficulty. In a case of extreme necessity, we are bound, when we are aware of it, to make even a great sacrifice, in order to relieve it. In a case of grievous necessity, we are not called to make a great sacrifice, unless we are bound to do so by some other claim which justice or piety may have upon us. In ordinary necessity or suffering, we are required to make some little sacrifice at least, inasmuch as an act of charity to a neighbour oftentimes demands some effort or inconvenience on our part; and that which costs us nothing at all can scarcely deserve the name of a charitable act.

With regard to the discrimination we are to make between those who have greater or less claims upon us, we are to give the preference, when other circumstances are the same, to those who are most closely connected with us by ties of kindred, friendship, or some other accidental relationship; for nature itself suggests this distinction. Parents, husband or wife, children, brothers or sisters, and other family relatives will have the first claim upon us, and usually in the order in which I have recited them. Friends, benefactors, masters and mistresses, and other superiors will have a claim before strangers, for the same reason, that our human nature so directs us in our choice; although an extreme or grievous necessity in one more remotely connected, will make a louder call than a slight suffering in one more nearly related. In the case of the wounded man relieved by the Good Samaritan, we have an instance of one in extreme necessity, relieved, at a great sacrifice, by a stranger. For it would have cost him a great deal to break in upon his journey, spend a whole night attending to an invalid, to give up for the use of another what he had provided for his own wants, and make himself answerable for all the expenses which might be incurred. His act proved what our Blessed Lord wished to teach by the Parable, that a stranger even is our neighbour, and that when he is in want and suffering, we ought to be ready at the expense of our own convenience to afford relief.

Can you now, my dear brethren, have any difficulty in understanding who is your neighbour, and in acknowledging the existence of cases in which you can apply the use of what you admit? Go to the poor, or treat them gently at least and with charity, when they are brought under your notice, for each poor man is your neighbour. Go to the sick, or at least compassionate them

in their afflictions, and if you visit them not yourselves, be glad to take a part in the merciful work of those that do so, because each sick person is your neighbour. Do deeds of justice to others as you would have others do towards you, because if you fail in respect of any one, it is a neighbour that you have injured. Masters, treat your servants with forbearance; deal not harshly and oppressively with them: do not look upon them as of a lower order in creation than yourselves; for each of them has claims upon your attention, being your neighbour. Feel for those that are out of the Church: pray for them, and make every allowance which charity demands of you: each is your neighbour, and perhaps if he had had chances and opportunities equal to yours, he would have far outstripped you in sanctity and union with God. Look not upon any one as your enemy: forgive him, love him as you love yourself: enemy and brother are incompatible terms: each is your neighbour, and each neighbour is your brother. *If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat: if he be thirsty, give him to drink*;[5] for his necessities have a claim upon you, and you must not exclude a single one from your charity.

And now it only remains for us to practise the lesson which we cannot fail to understand. In some cases it may demand an effort. But does not Heaven demand efforts, and does it not deserve every effort which is made in order to gain it? When the questioner of our Lord quoted the double law of charity, our Divine Redeemer said to him: *Do this, and thou shalt live.* The Day of Judgment for each of us is coming on, when the Good Samaritan Himself is to pronounce upon our doom. The Judgment will be just such an one as we should expect from such a Judge. He will enumerate the works of compassion which we ought to do towards our neighbour; and accordingly as they have been fulfilled or omitted, will our fate be determined. Many souls are lost for no other reason but this, that they have been so heedless about their duties to their neighbour. In their practices of devotion, their prayers, their approaching to the Sacraments, their membership of pious Confraternities, they think they are doing much for their souls, and flatter themselves that this is all that God demands of them. But who is their neighbour? The poor, and the sick, and children, and the sorrowful, and those whom they could assist, if they would only be willing to do so: all these are passed over, and never thought of, although our Blessed Lord has given so solemn a warning, that duties to our neighbour will decide our fate in eternity.

If any are uncharitable to the poor, unsympathising towards

[5] Rom. xii. 20.

the sick, indifferent about the wants, especially the spiritual wants, of children, unforgiving and relentless towards those who have injured them, what will be their feelings when the Good Samaritan will examine whether their character has been like to His own? But to those who have been active in their compassion, who have recognised a neighbour in every one who suffered, and a brother in every one who had offended them, it will be shown how abundant in His mercy, and how generous in rewarding, is the merciful Judge of His own children. They will then have revealed to them the fertile product of deeds of compassion: how each of such acts was followed by the bestowal of special graces and signs of favour. Through these means temptations had been conquered, virtues acquired, a closer union with God attained. Grace led to Grace, and Perseverance followed, and it is Perseverance alone that is rewarded.

The best blessing that I can wish you is that of our Blessed Saviour's, that we should not admire the Good Samaritan simply, but imitate him. *Go thou and do in like manner.* Admit that you have duties to your neighbour, be practical and zealous in fulfilling them, and then you will have understood and illustrated the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

SERMON LIII.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THANKSGIVING.

Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine?

The event recorded in to-day's Gospel illustrates very clearly what is the conduct of Almighty God towards man, and what too frequently is the return of man towards God. God is abundant in His Goodness: man is too forgetful of the source from which his blessings have been derived. In a time of trial and sorrow and want, we run to our good God and ask for comfort and assistance, and like the afflicted lepers, feeling the state in which we are, we cry out: *Jesus, Master, have pity upon us.* Jesus does have pity, and the favour is granted, as it always is when it is asked for with confidence. And then it too often happens that we forget the Hand that blesses us, and we pass on without making any act of thanksgiving. And so when our Blessed Lord, in to-day's Gospel, being touched, as those who love are always touched by the want of gratitude on the part of those from whom they have reason to expect it, affectionately expostulates, saying: *Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine?* He only says what Almighty God may be imagined as constantly saying, when from His High Throne in Heaven He looks down upon earth, and, recounting those acts of mercy with which the earth is full, asks: Where is the return? How few are the acts of thanksgiving which ascend from earth to Heaven, in comparison with the acts of goodness which descend from Heaven unto earth!

Let us try to understand what is meant by Thanksgiving, and what are the duties and acts connected with it.

I. Thanksgiving, as a duty towards God, means an inward feeling, and an expression by some outward means, of gratitude for favours of which we acknowledge Him to be the source. It must be felt in the heart, otherwise the outward expression would not be sincere; and this feeling ought to be accompanied by

some outward expression, or desire of expression, otherwise it will be imperfect and will be wanting in that activity which is a proof of its real existence. To pretend to be thankful, but to be unwilling to do anything in return to Him whom you profess to be thanking, implies a practical contradiction. The word that we are explaining, Thanksgiving, or giving of thanks, requires, if it has any meaning, that there is a giving, and therefore that something is done as an expression of the inward feeling of thankfulness. You observe, that it was the omission of this outward expression of thanks, that our dear Lord finds fault with in His words of expostulation; and it was for the performance of this outward duty that He praised the one who came back for that purpose. All the ten poor afflicted lepers suffering under their loathsome calamity, must have felt a thrill of joy when all of a sudden, on their way to show themselves to the priests, they found themselves cleansed and restored to perfect health. But with nine of them it ended there. They went on their way rejoicing, no doubt; but joy and gratitude are two different things. Joy does not imply a duty towards another, but gratitude does, and it was the forgetfulness of this duty which prompted the question: *Where are the nine?*

Thanksgiving, with its inward feeling and outward expression, is a duty required of us by Almighty God. But why does He value and demand our gratitude? What good can it do to Him? It is because He loves His own Glory, and loves us, that He asks for this tribute. To refuse it to Him would be equivalent to a denial of His being the source whence every good thing comes to us. Of this Glory God is so jealous, that He protects it by the first of His commandments; and by the Prophet Isaias He declares: *I, the Lord: this is My Name. I will not give My Glory to another.*[1] And it is because He loves us, that He values our acts of Thanksgiving. Every loving heart values a return. We love to be thanked; and it is always painful to us, if favours which we show are not appreciated by those whom we esteem. Almighty God expresses His feeling upon this point in the majestic words of the opening of the prophecy of Isaias: *Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have brought up children, and have exalted them, but they have despised Me.*

You may value any gift for two reasons: for its inherent value, and on account of the person who gives it. And most frequently it is this latter circumstance which adds immensely to the value of any offering. A mother prizes greatly the present

[1] Is. xlii. 8.

which her own little child may offer her on a birth or a feast day. It is not here the intrinsic worth of what is given that is so much valued. She herself probably afforded the means by which the little treasure was purchased, and she could have easily procured it for herself had she so desired. But what she sees in the gift, is the love and the heart of her child, which she considers to be beyond any earthly present, and which is to her an occasion of such pure joy. So it is that Almighty God values and demands from us offerings of thanksgiving; because with the outward tribute and expression our heart and love go in company, and it is for these hearts that He is always pleading in His precepts of love. To keep back our thanksgiving is to keep back our love, and this our good God does not and cannot allow.

See also how many acts are implied in our offerings of thanks to God. Faith is implied; because we are acknowledging that God is the source whence cometh down *every good and perfect gift*.[2] Our dependence upon our Creator and His dominion are thus recognised, and we are acknowledging the connexion which subsists between the Creator and the creature. Love is implied; because we are showing an appreciation of God's goodness, and goodness is the object of Love. And God also views our thanksgiving as an act of our Love towards Him: our act of Love in thanksgiving being a kind of echo to His act of goodness in bestowing His favours upon us. And even Hope of future blessings is implied in thanksgiving for past favours; for this is sometimes required as a condition for a continuance of those favours. In our intercourse with each other, if we find that signs of kindness upon our part are unrequited, we soon discontinue them. And so does Almighty God, if we thank Him not for what He has given, judge that we value not His gift, and He ceases to be so abundant in those signs of His goodness. If we hope for future favours, we must show by thankfulness that we appreciate past ones. Such, then, is Thanksgiving.

II. But what have we to thank God for? Here we are overcome by the abundance of the objects which start up around us. As *in Him we live and move and be*,[3] so it is impossible for us to breathe, or to exercise our powers of soul and body, without meeting with the benefits of God, which surround us and enter into us like the very atmosphere in which we are existing. Everywhere we find reasons to be offering our acts of thanksgiving to the generous God we have to deal with. Whenever we are engaged in the holy duty of mental prayer, and may happen to feel a difficulty in exercising the powers of our soul in a work which

[2] James i. 17. [3] Acts xvii. 28.

brings such blessings with it, let us devote ourselves to acts of Thanksgiving for all the objects which we can command to rise up around us.

First of all, think of God and of what He is, and thank Him even for His own Perfections, the existence of which He has vouchsafed to make known to you by revelation. Has it ever occurred to you to think upon that act of thanksgiving made by the Church in the Angelical Hymn, the *Gloria in excelsis;* when we all bow the head in adoration whilst the Church sings the *Gratias agimus:* 'We give Thee thanks for Thy own great Glory'? We thank God because He is what He is: so great, so glorious, so powerful, so good, so infinite in every perfection. And why should we not do so again and again? This feeling of thanking and of praising God on account of His infinite perfections, is what the Church expresses in her beautiful office of Lauds. She contemplates the beauty of God: she records His power and His dominion over all creatures: how angels are around Him and praise Him in Heaven: how He spoke but a word, and gave an intimation of His Will, and in a moment creation started into existence. On this account it is that the Church loves to praise God, and combines together, as the grateful leper did, her songs of praise and thanksgiving. The leper came back to thank his Benefactor, and of him our Blessed Lord says: There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger. Thus Praise and Thanksgiving are intimately connected; and they are connected, because Love inspires the expression of both feelings in the same accents.

Thank your good God also for all that He has done. His works bear testimony of Him. They tell of His Wisdom, His Power, and His Goodness. But many of His works are mute and dead. They do not resist Him: they have come into existence, because He has called them forth from their nothingness, and they do His Will and manifest His Glory. But they cannot answer Him or reflect back actively His Attributes. Man is the spokesman of creation. It is his place to act as a mediator of thanksgiving, and to call upon all the rest of creation to join in the chorus of praise and gratitude, which he leads and undertakes to offer to the great Creator. In his soul, man upon earth does the work of the spiritual world: in his body, he represents the visible world. Let him, then, call upon every spirit to praise the Lord, and upon the sun and moon, and stars, and all things on earth and in the seas, to join in his songs of praise and thanksgiving!

Thank Him for what you are: for your existence, for having

been made to His image, and being destined for the noble end of possessing Himself: for your gifts of soul and body, and for the constant spiritual and temporal blessings which you have received and are receiving from His generous hands. Thank Him for what you are not, but, only for Him, might have been. Compare the sorrows and miseries and spiritual destitution of others with your happier lot. God has spared you in His Providence from trials and afflictions which your daily experience brings under your notice in others. Thank Him for what you have been, and what you are intended to be. You can look back upon the time when you were once certainly high in His Grace and favour, when your baptismal innocence was reflected to the joy of angels, who then regarded you as one of themselves: when also after your First Communion, and other devout receptions of this Sacrament of Love, you shared St. John's privilege of reposing on your Saviour's breast, or, even more than that, participated in the honour of His own Mother, when she bore Him within her. Such days have been yours, even if, through your own negligence, they are now yours no longer. And in your thanksgiving look to the future, and praise your good God by anticipation for the glory that is there in store for you, and which certainly must one day be yours, if you be only true to yourself.

And as your thoughts are upon Heaven, thank your God for having given you such help from His holy place and such protection from Sion. For *He hath given His angels charge of thee, to guard thee in all thy ways.*[4] Is it not a cause for thanksgiving that the same bright spirits who minister to His will in Heaven, and the same blessed saints who have there attained to their reward, are commissioned by God to attend to you and be helping you on towards the attainment of a fellowship in their glory? Thank Him for the gift of Faith, and that He has vouchsafed to reveal to you truths which are hidden from others. Thank Him for your Redemption: for the great Price which has been so generously paid for the ransom of your soul. Thank Him for your membership with the Church, and for the immense advantages which you derive through her solicitude and her rich ministrations. Have you not, then, plenty to thank your God for, and can you ever find it difficult to spend a few quick minutes in union with God, especially when assisted by all the helps to fervour which are given in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament?

Well might the Psalmist exclaim, when he thought over all that God had done for him: Quid retribuam: *What return shall*

[4] Ps. xc.

I make to the Lord for all that He hath bestowed upon me?[5] And well might St. Paul, with his own generous and devoted heart, urge this duty of thanksgiving repeatedly in his Epistles, as one of the exercises ever incumbent upon a Christian: *Speaking to yourselves*, as he says in one place, *in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father*:[6] and in another, recommending it as one of the remedies against over-anxiety: *Be nothing solicitous: but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God.*[7] In the midst of all his labours and persecutions, we never find him gloomy or desponding; but in spite of all his tribulations he goes forward cheerfully, thanking God that by them he is ultimately to enter into His kingdom: *We glory also in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not.*[8] Well, too, does the Church, in her noble hymn of praise and thanksgiving, the *Te Deum laudamus*, send forth her thanks to God, and join upon earth in the eternal stream of gratitude which from the songs of Cherubim and Seraphim is ever flowing before His Throne in Heaven!

II. Would, my dear brethren, that we could thank our good God as He deserves and demands! But how can we do it? How can our poor feeble accents find power enough to work up their way before the Throne of God? Fortunately, and may God be praised for it! we have a means of offering a tribute of thanksgiving worthy of our great God, and doubly acceptable in His presence: acceptable, because of the inherent value of what is offered, and acceptable because of the Person who offers it. Christ Jesus Himself, the only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father, equal to His Father, and therefore infinite as He is, has undertaken to do this work for us and with us, and to take our tribute and offer it in His own Name before the Face of His Father. In taking upon Himself our human nature, and in becoming the one Mediator between God and man,[9] our dearest Saviour offered Himself for us, not only to pay the price required by the justice of God for our sins, but also to pay the debt of gratitude which man owes to God for His Goodness and Mercy. In the first instant in which the Word was made Flesh and began to dwell amongst us, there began to ascend from earth to Heaven acts of thanksgiving, infinitely more acceptable than all that angels had

[5] Ps. cxv. [6] Eph. v. 19. [7] Phil. iv. 6.
[8] Rom. v. 4, 5. [9] 1 Tim. ii. 5.

until that time been pouring forth in their joyous songs. And from that instant the acts have never ceased, but are always causing the Father to look with good pleasure upon the Face of His Anointed One. For our Divine Lord came to offer Himself up in sacrifice to His Father; and Thanksgiving is one of the ends for which sacrifice was originally instituted by God. He came to do the Will of His Father; and His Father's Will in designing the Mystery of the Incarnation was, that He should receive an adequate offering of Thanksgiving for all that He had done and was ever doing towards His creatures.

It is by Jesus Christ that all blessings are brought to us, and it is through Jesus Christ that we make to the Author of these blessings an offering of thanksgiving equal to what we have received, being of infinite value. This is one of the chief ends for which our Divine Lord, having become man, has left Himself perpetually with us in the Blessed Sacrament, and in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is from the rising to the setting of the sun offering Himself in thanksgiving to His Father. In the Book of Leviticus[10] oblations of thanksgiving were ordered to consist of unleavened wafers, the matter of the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist, as if emblematical and a shadow of that good thing to come. The word itself, Eucharist, means thanksgiving; and when our Blessed Lord at the Last Supper instituted the great Sacrifice of the New Law, He associated thanksgiving with the acts which He then performed: *and taking bread, He gave thanks, and brake, and gave to them*, &c.[11]

The Church, in offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, never loses sight of this duty. At the opening of the most sacred part of the Mass, the minister of God, after calling upon the people in the Preface to lift up their hearts to God, and being assured that her wish has been complied with, then orders them to make an act of thanksgiving.[12] And at the time of the Holy Communion, she expresses her thanks in the generous words of the Psalmist: *What return shall I make to the Lord for all that He hath bestowed upon me? I will take the cup of salvation, and will call upon the Name of the Lord.* And in preserving the Blessed Sacrament constantly for our adoration, she gives us the opportunity of associating our own poor feeble expressions of thanks with those which, from the Tabernacle in which the Holy Victim is residing, are ever ascending into the presence of the Eternal Father. It is no idle Life which our dearest Lord is leading amongst us in this Mystery of Love. There He is ever busy, as

[10] Lev. vii. 12.
[11] Luke xxii. 19.
[12] Sursum corda. Gratias agamus, &c.

He was when He conversed visibly amongst men, about His Father's work. There He is ever contemplating the infinite perfections of His Father, praising, exalting them, and giving thanks for what He is in Himself, and for what He has done to men. There He continues the work of making satisfaction for our sins, and of supplying for our insufficiency, in all the offerings of love, praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, which He makes to the Author of all our blessings.

But although our Blessed Lord acquits Himself of this debt of thanksgiving, we are not dispensed from our duty of joining with Him in the offering which He makes for us. He invites us to imitate His example and to associate ourselves with Him, in paying the tribute which is due to our God. He consents to accept our acts of thanksgiving, and to pass them on in His own Name to His Father. How can we refuse such an invitation, or find it hard under such circumstances to perform a duty so acceptable and so binding! 'O my God!' St. Theresa used to exclaim: 'O God! that we should receive so much, and return so little!' Generous soul that she was, she could have wished, she also used to say, to be torn in pieces as a tribute of thanksgiving; and she could not conceive how one could live in this world any other kind of life but that which is spent in Heaven, which is a life of thanksgiving and praise.

Habits of thankfulness to our good God, then, are to be encouraged, because from them proceed such good results. First of all, they necessarily exclude sin; for sin is an act of ingratitude which is incompatible with a spirit of thanksgiving. Next, they stimulate to generous efforts and sacrifices in the service of God; for we never hesitate to do something practical in return to one whom we feel to deserve our gratitude. Then, again, acts of thanksgiving are loving acts. They are helping us to keep up an union and an intercourse with God. As His benefits come down like rain upon us, our acts of gratitude return like moisture ascending in the form of evaporation towards Heaven. In reward for them, our generous God sends other graces continuously upon us; and thus His benefits and our thanksgiving keep us linked so constantly together. Thus we are rehearsing now what we are to exercise for all Eternity, when in the kingdom of Heaven we too shall join with the Angels and all those gathered around the Throne of God, singing the canticle: *Amen. Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour, and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever, Amen!*[13]

[13] Rev. vii. 12.

SERMON LIV.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

DUTIES TOWARDS PROVIDENCE.

THERE are in the Gospel of this Sunday two sayings of our Divine Lord, very familiar to us, and containing within them, as all His words contain, matter for deep reflection, and lessons of most practical importance. One occurs at the commencement, the other at the close. For our Lord introduces the lesson which He is about to teach with the words: *No man can serve two masters;* and He concludes it with what He gives as its summary and practical fruit: *Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.* And between these two utterances intervenes that beautiful instruction, in which He tells us what are our duties towards Providence, and what is the special fault in this regard that we must labour to avoid.

Our Gospel of to-day forms a portion of the Sermon on the Mount; and in that part which is now brought before us, our Blessed Lord is using the following line of argument. We must weigh it well, for it deserves the weighing. He commences by establishing the principle, that there is always an antagonism between God and the world, and that it is impossible for our allegiance to be divided between them both. We must declare ourselves positively either for one or the other; and of course the one whom we ought to acknowledge and to serve is not the world but God. And He at once anticipates a difficulty and an objection. If we do not labour for temporal things, and show our solicitude in supplying our wants of the body, such as food and clothing, what is to become of us? And He answers that God will take care of us: that He has established a law of Providence for that very purpose: that the inferior creatures, such as the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, are provided for and clothed with a beauty which no human skill or splendour can rival; and that we who have been more favoured, and who stand higher in the order of creation, shall for a greater reason be pro-

tected, and not left to perish for want. So that to be always anxious about such things, shows an unchildlike and a mere pagan mind, not the good confiding spirit of children of adoption. After all these things do the heathens seek. And then to show once more the contrast between what such solicitous persons are and what they ought to be, and to remind us again that God has claims upon us which the world has not, He ends with the moral: *Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.*

I. Is there not, my dear brethren, a call for such a lesson in regard to all of us?—a lesson which is not to serve as an apology for idleness, or a justification against that industry to which we are all in some way or another bound, but yet one which will caution us against an over-anxious spirit, especially with regard to our temporal affairs, or being too much influenced by worldly principles. Who are they who seem utterly to forget God in their labours and solicitudes about what concerns their position and comforts in this world? It is they who practically deny, or who think not enough of, the Providence which watches over them. Who are they who make their temporal duties serve as an excuse for the neglect of the obligations of religion, always giving God the second place, and the world the first, in their great business of life? Who are they who so seldom approach the Holy Sacraments, because of their unwillingness to devote the necessary time to a due and careful preparation: and on holidays of obligation satisfy themselves so easily for non-attendance at holy Mass, in order that all their time may be given up to the calls of worldly concerns? Who are they who, when they profess to obey that commandment which says: *Six days shalt thou labour, and on the seventh thou shalt do no work*, sacrifice the second part of the command in favour of the first? They who thus neglect what religion demands in the name of Almighty God, cannot be said to think much of His Providence, or to place their trust in Him alone, who promises that those who do trust in Him shall never be abandoned.

And who again are they who allow themselves to be utterly, or too easily, prostrated by the sorrows and trials which come upon them in the various circumstances of life? It is they who have not learnt, by practising their duties towards Providence, to view all these occasions as opportunities of further detachment from creatures and closer union with God. Who, also, are those who when they see the Church and our Holy Father persecuted and humbled by the powers of the world, either despond too easily or grow weak and compromising in their allegiance? It is

they who fail to remember that the opposition of the world is a proof of God's approval, and that a passing triumph of the world is designed and permitted by Providence, for the more complete purification and trial of the faithful, and to enable us to call with greater fervour upon Him, who has promised ultimate victory to His own Church over all the efforts and plots of the world.

What especially are we to say of those who, on false principles of science, pretending to lay down as a necessary truth the immutability of the laws of nature, prescribe limits to the very omnipotence of God, and excluding Him from any share in the working and application of those laws, deny expressly the existence of Providence? They make the language of nature to silence the voice of God, and in the conflict which they dare to establish between what is natural and supernatural, give the preference to the former, and deny the truths which our good God has vouchsafed to communicate to us through the means of Revelation. Such ones directly attack Providence, and will not allow the great Creator to have any power of action in His own world. And although some may dread to go so far in their impiety, there are even amongst professing Christians some who timidly shrink from standing up for the liberty of God, and thus doubt, if they do not expressly deny, the continual superintendence of Providence in the government of the universe. Thus, the world abounds with those to whom the words of our Divine Lord are applicable, when He censures them for littleness of faith, and puts them on a level with the heathens.

II. We have certain duties towards Divine Providence: and the first of these duties is expressly directed against this last fault to which we have alluded. We have a duty of Faith towards Providence, and it must be, what Christian Faith ought always to be, a practical Faith. We must believe that there is a Providence; that is to say, that Almighty God superintends and watches over the world that He has made, and is by His will and His power governing it in every detail. The beautiful prayer of Judith, when she was begging for strength to strike the blow which was to secure liberty to the Israelites, expresses what ought to be the act of Faith of every creature in this regard: *O Lord God! Thou hast done the things of old, and hast devised one thing after another: and what Thou hast designed hath been done. For all Thy ways are prepared, and in Thy Providence Thou hast placed Thy judgments.*[1] Providence implies, therefore, the presence of God in His creation. It is indeed a continued act of creation, for it requires the same power to preserve in existence, those things

[1] Judith ix. 4, 5.

which that power first brought into existence. In the hands of God, therefore, are life and death. Our life began the moment He willed, and our death is to come at whatever moment He designs.

Not a single event, however trifling it may appear, can occur which is unknown to God, or undesigned by Him. To-day's Gospel expressly teaches this, when our Blessed Lord reminds us of God's care over the birds and flowers which adorn the world. Elsewhere He says : *the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*[2] And the Psalmist expresses the concurrence of God in supporting every single creature which He has brought into existence : *The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them meat in due season. Thou openest Thy hand, and fillest every living creature with blessing.*[3] Each one of us, therefore, and each single incident in the life and fortunes of each, is under the guidance of God : and in our regard not an act occurs which can affect us, but God has His hand in it and disposes it as He wills. Even I myself, then, am a child of the Providence of God. Even over me, unworthy as I am, He is watching with all the care and love of a Father. It was not I made myself, but He made me : it is not I that provide for myself, but God foresees, and shelters me under every trial and want. This is a thought which ought at once to show the disloyalty and spirit of rebellion on the part of those, who stand up against Providence and deny its influence in the various events of the universe.

Two faults against Providence are corrected and guarded against by what religion teaches us in respect to its action. The first error is that of those who would pretend to attribute everything that occurs to chance, as if Almighty God looked on in a state of indifference, and declined any direction of the world which He has made. This error is corrected by a belief in the two Attributes of God, His Wisdom and Power, in the exercise of which He views what is best for His own glory and the good of His creatures, and carries this into execution. These two Attributes are blended together in that declaration of the wise man in which he says of Wisdom : *She reacheth from end to end mightily ; and ordereth all things sweetly.*[4] The second error is that which assigns fatalism or an inexorable necessity as the cause of every event, as if the Almighty were unmoved by the prayers of those who call upon Him, and unwilling, as well as unable, to alter what is decreed as certain to occur beyond the power of change. This is corrected by a declaration of our faith in the Love and Mercy of our good God, who allows Himself to be

[2] Matt. x. 30. [3] Ps. cxliv. [4] Wisd. viii. 1.

moved by the prayers of His children, and is ready to answer their every petition, bestowing grace in the time of need, and protecting His own in the hour of danger. Thus in His Providence, God manifests to man His Attributes of Wisdom, Power, Justice, Goodness, Mercy and Love.

Another duty which we owe to Divine Providence, and it is that which seems most especially urged upon us in the Gospel to-day, is Hope and Confidence in its protection. We are not to be like those who acknowledge no God as watching over them, or who in the language of folly as well as of impiety say in their hearts : *there is no God.*[5] We are God's favourite creatures upon earth. It is for us that He has made the earth and all that is on it. The sun and moon, the stars that shine upon us from Heaven, the seasons in their variety and succession, the lower orders of animals, the fruits of the earth—all are made for man. Why, then, are we solicitous through littleness of faith? It is we alone that can pray to God, and who by prayer can gain Him over to submit even to our own will. It is we alone who can call upon Him to be faithful to His promises, to *give us this day our daily bread*, and to avert from us every evil of soul and body. And have we not an assurance that He who has already done so much for us will do yet more? He is a Father to us, and He bids us call Him such. We are His children, and it is by this name He loves to call us. Hear the affectionate argument of our dear Lord, in which He impresses upon us the consequences of our connexion with God as His children : *Which of you if he ask his father bread, will he give him a stone? or a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? . . . . If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from Heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him?*[6]

If, then, we oftentimes see the wicked prospering and the good suffering, is this against the claims of Providence for us to hope in Him? Do not both Faith and Hope combine in assuring us that this is not our only or our real home, but that God our Father has made us for another, towards which, under His protection, we are journeying on? And if the hand of sorrow may at times be pressing upon us, does this prove anything more than that our good God is giving us an opportunity of calling upon Him for aid, and of turning up our eyes to the mountain whence help is sure to come to us?[7] Therefore we are never to be broken down by the trials which Almighty God in His goodness allows to befall us. He sends them in order that we may run to Him and cling the more closely upon Him. When the friends of Job

[5] Ps. xiii. [6] Luke xi. 11, 13. [7] Ps. cxx.

tried to make him murmur against Providence, and wished to prove to him that his great afflictions were a sign that he had been cast off by God, how nobly did the Patriarch answer: *Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him, . . . and He shall be my Saviour.*[8]

We owe also to Providence another high duty, that of Love. We must love Divine Providence, because we are then loving God Himself. His Providence is Himself: it is His own Will working out its blessed designs in the government and care of His creatures. And why therefore should we not love it, and make our love the chief duty we owe to Divine Providence? *for there remain these three, Faith, Hope, and Charity; but the greatest of these is Charity.*[9] What means that petition in our Lord's Prayer, in which He teaches us to say, *Thy will be done*, except that it is a declaration of our desire, that our will should be in union with God's? and union of wills is implied by Love. It is the same as if we were to pray: May Thy Providence rule supreme, and may all creatures submit lovingly to its decrees upon earth, as the holy Angels and Saints do the bidding which is accorded to them in Heaven!

Who, when he admits this duty of loving Divine Providence, can ever allow himself to murmur or repine at any of its dispensations? Let poverty, sufferings, sorrows, and trials of any kind come down upon such an one, and in each of these he sees but a reason to bless God and to love Him. *The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the Name of the Lord!*[10] His faith and hope must prepare the way for this loving resignation; for when he firmly believes that nothing can happen without God's will or permission, and when he has learnt to have such confidence in God, that he is ready to accept with thankfulness whatever He sends upon him, then his love is not mere sentiment; it is active and unitive, and every design of Providence serves to draw such an one more closely to God. This will help us to understand the generous acts of the Saints, who made every event that occurred, only an additional link of union between themselves and the one Object of their love. We can understand the act of St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, of whom it is said, that so clearly did she see God in every most trifling circumstance, that sometimes the sight of a flower would throw her into an ecstasy, at the thought that God had designed its beauty through love for her. It was this same loving spirit which suggested that exclamation of a devoted child of God, which a spiritual writer tells us was rewarded by a great grace from God: May all pos-

[8] Job xii. 15, 16. [9] 1 Cor. xiii. 13. [10] Job i. 21.

sible honour and glory be given to Thee, O God, and whatever Thou willest may that come down upon me.[11]

Of each one of us, then, our good God in His Providence has the most tender care, and in every act which affects us, His Wisdom, Power, and Love have been exercised; and therefore we must acknowledge His presence in it, and adore His Providence. For every blessing we thank that Providence; in every sorrow we invoke and resign ourselves to it. It comes as a comfort and a remedy in every want and suffering. It supplies food to the hungry, shelter to the homeless, relief to the sorrowful, protection to the weak, and company to the lonely. It is our good God who hath both suggested and answered the prayer we make each night in the words of the Psalmist, when we invoke upon ourselves the loving shelter of Divine Providence: Guard us, O Lord, as the apple of Thine eye, and protect us beneath the shadow of Thy wings.

We, my dear brethren, in the resolutions which we are willing to make to pay to Divine Providence the threefold tribute of our faith, hope, and love, must guard ourselves especially against the faults which are opposed to each of these duties. There is the fault of those who seem never to think of the Providence of God. They do not expressly deny its existence, as do those unbelievers to whom we have already alluded; but the thought of the protecting hand of God never crosses their mind, and in the events of life, both joyful and sorrowful, it is no habit of theirs to acknowledge the will and the work of God, and to accept what occurs with thankfulness or resignation. This thoughtlessness arises from a want of practical Faith.

Then there are those who err through want of Hope and Confidence, and thus violate the second duty we owe to the Providence of God. Worldly solicitude with such ones is their ruling principle. Religious duties of Prayer, Holy Mass, the Sacraments, and Works of Mercy, are all made to give way to what the world is asking for. They forget that the blessing of God upon less labour, will produce more fruit than the most incessant toil without that blessing. These persons hope in themselves and in their temporal resources, but have no hope in God. *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses*, says the Psalmist; *but we will call upon the Name of the Lord our God.*[12]

And to what cause, except to an absence of Love, are we to attribute those murmurings and that want of quiet resignation to God's dispensation, which are so often expressed when matters are against what we, through mere natural feelings, might prefer?

[11] *Sancta Sophia*, by Father Baker. [12] Ps. xix.

Union of Will with God is a consequence of His Love. In every trial which befalls us, an act of resignation brings comfort and peace. We must expect the Cross, because our dear Lord requires it as a condition of His service. It is He who has said to His followers: *If any one will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me.*[13] There are two ways of carrying the Cross. One is to drag it slowly and heavily along by our unaided efforts, and then it galls and presses without any relief. Another way is to beg our Lord to bear it with us, and then we move on cheerfully; for He takes all the weight upon Himself, and only asks us to acknowledge His presence, and to walk by His side. 'When thou comest to that degree of patience,' says the author of the *Following of Christ*, 'that tribulation is sweet to thee, then mayest thou trust that it is well with thee; for thou hast found paradise upon earth. But as long as it is grievous to thee to suffer, so long it shall not be well with thee, and thou shalt not be in the perfect way of patience.'[14]

O, my dear brethren, what would not the earth be, if Divine Providence were believed in, trusted, and loved by all? It would be the home of Peace, and be more like to Heaven. At least let us try to make it such for ourselves, by never mistrusting our own good God. He is our Father and our best of friends. To His Providence should we trust ourselves, as our Blessed Lord trusted Himself to St. Joseph; and then we shall find the way to Heaven shorter and smoother, and shall from our own experience be convinced of the truth, that God never abandons those who have learnt to place their hope in Him.

[13] Matt. xvi. 24. [14] Book ii. chap. xii.

SERMON LV.

SUNDAY WITHIN OCTAVE OF BIRTH OF B.V.M.

BIRTH AND NAME OF MARY.

The name of the Virgin was Mary.

THE Church is this day engaged in the celebration of two Festivals in honour of the ever-blessed Mother of God, namely her Birth and her Name. And it might seem as if we were wanting in love and loyalty both to the Church, and to her who is the subject of these Festivals, if we did not devote some special attention to what is declared to be a cause of joy to the whole world. Nor is it the Church merely that holds before us the holy Mother of our Incarnate Lord as having a claim upon our honour and our love. Almighty God Himself demands this tribute for her; and as it is our duty at all times to enter into His views, to adore the designs of His Providence, even in what may seem to be a source of calamity and sorrow, so is it incumbent upon us, as we value the great Mystery of the Incarnation, to thank God for every detail which in His Wisdom, His Power, and His Love, He has vouchsafed to realise, in working out His designs in connexion with this great source of joy and blessing to the whole universe. The faithful children of the Church know this well, and with readiness of heart they enter into her every thought and feeling, when she speaks to them of the connexion in this Mystery between the Mother and the Son. She is sometimes misunderstood by others; and misunderstood, because her voice has not been heard, nor her motives appreciated.

I feel that it will be fitting on the occasion of these Festivals, to urge a devotion, which the Church is always encouraging, because of the blessings which attend upon it, towards the sacred Mother of our Divine Lord. But that the devotion may be solidly grounded, we will consider in association with the Birth and Name of our Blessed Lady, first, what was the destiny designed for her in the decrees of Almighty God; and secondly, how faithfully that destiny was fulfilled.

I. What we mean by the destiny of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is the end for which Almighty God intended her, when He designed to create her. With regard to each of us Almighty God has a design; for if what the Psalmist says is true, as it must be, when of God's creative acts he declares: *Thou hast done everything in wisdom*, there is a motive which influences our Creator in regard to each of those beings, whom He has endowed with the wonderful gifts which He has bestowed upon man. He does not make any one of us as it were by chance, or for the sake of an idle display of His Power; but He marks out a path for each of us, which He intends us to pursue, and thus acts as a Wise Being, with a purpose and an end in view. All creatures are of course made by God, in order to promote and to minister to His glory; and it is a part of their destiny that they should contribute their share to that act of praise, which all creation is ever sending forth unto God. But man, and each man, has something higher to do than pay a mere passive tribute to his Creator. Man is sent here to save his soul. This is the destiny of each of us; and if we attain it not, we know the woe that has been pronounced by Him who has said: *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?*[1] And each of us also has his own special class of duties associated with the position in which Divine Providence has willed to place him, with the fulfilment of which duties our perfection and salvation, and therefore our destiny, are intimately and necessarily connected.

In the history of the world, there stand forward prominently before us from time to time persons for whom an exceptional destiny has been marked out; that is to say, whom Almighty God has sent into the world for some unusual work. So, in times of national calamities and in critical periods, one is raised up providentially to control events; the man is equal to the hour. It was so in the instances that are repeated in the book of Judges, in which we read again and again of the Israelites, in the time of extreme danger and despair, that *they cried out to the Lord, and He raised them up a deliverer.*[2] And at the uprising of heresies, it has pleased God, in defence of His own truth, to raise up able defenders of the Church's doctrines, when attacked by these unbelievers, as Saints Athanasius and Cyril, in defence of the Incarnation; or as He raised up St. Benedict to assert the rules of Christian perfection, when immorality was aiming another dangerous blow against the holiness of the Church. The daughters of Israel used to hope that their destiny might be to be reckoned amongst the maternal ancestors of the Messias; hence the mourn-

[1] Matt. xvi. 26. [2] Judges iii. 9, 15, &c.

ing of the daughter of Jephte, who went about the mountains bewailing her virginity.

The great mystery of the Incarnation, which in the beginning of the decrees of God had been designed for His glory and to bring peace upon earth, implied that some should be more immediately connected with its accomplishment than others, and these were destined by God for the office which they would have to fulfil. St. John the Baptist, the precursor of our Incarnate Lord, had his destiny marked out for him, and it had been foretold by the Prophet Isaias, who had said of him that he was *the voice of one crying out in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths.*[3] But how much higher, because more intimately connected with this deep mystery, was the destiny of Mary, from whom the only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father was to take the flesh, in which He was to accomplish the redemption of the world!

We find her destiny, therefore, linked with His in prophecy. When the first revelation was made to the world of the future coming of its Redeemer, the Mother is spoken of as well as the Son. The Seed was to crush the serpent's head; but the Woman, from whom the Seed was to spring, is associated in the enmities which were ever to subsist between the author of evil and his Conqueror. When the Emmanuel, God with us, was announced by Isaias, the Virgin-Mother is blended with Him in the prophetical declaration.[4] When the mysterious prophet Balaam spoke of those future days of glory, he said: *A star shall arise out of Jacob;*[5] and it is of her as well as of her Son the words are interpreted, as the Church calls her the Morning Star, which precedes in its rising the Sun from which it derives its brilliancy.

Her name, Mary, tells of her destiny; for this, we are told repeatedly in the Sacred Scriptures, was the mode of God's acting towards those for whom He intended a special work, and whom He called on that account by a special name which indicated it; as we read, amongst others, of John, given as a predestined name to the Baptist. St. Bernard interprets the name Mary as meaning the *Star of the Sea*, an emblem of hope in the midst of danger; and the Church applies this title to her in the beautiful hymn, *Ave Maris Stella.* St. Peter Chrysologus considers the meaning of Mary to be Queen; and this would well accord with her royal dignity, as Mother of Him who was truly the King, of whom prophets foretold as giving glory to the tribe of Judah. And the Church too seems to encourage this meaning in the antiphon, *Ave Regina Cœlorum*, the *Salve Regina*, and in all the queenly titles which

[3] Is. xl. 3. [4] Ibid. vii. 14. [5] Num. xxiv. 17.

are found in the Litany of Loreto. The name, too, is interpreted as meaning Bitterness ;[6] as if to signify that it was fitting that she, who was to be the Mother of the Man of Sorrows, should have a name expressive of the sword of sorrow which was one day to pierce her own soul, and of the bitterness with which she might well be oppressed through her compassion with her Son.

If the destiny of St. John the Baptist implied such sanctity that it reflected back even upon his parents, Zachary and Elizabeth, whose praises are recorded by the Evangelist, when he says of them that *they were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame*;[7] and if of himself it was declared by the great Judge of sanctity, that amongst the born of women there had not risen a greater than he ;[8] and if, in testimony of his having been sanctified in his mother's womb, and therefore having been born without sin, the Church celebrates the festival of his birth, may we not argue that the destiny of one still more intimately connected with that mystery, which brought grace and reconciliation into the world, implied great sanctity and exceptional privileges. When we argue in favour of her Immaculate Conception, we point to her destiny in proof of the fitness of that high privilege. To her sanctity did the Archangel Gabriel bear testimony, when he addressed her in the words intrusted to him by the Almighty, who sent him to declare to her that she was full of grace and blessed among women. To her sanctity did St. Elizabeth also bear her testimony, when, filled with the Holy Ghost, as the Evangelist is careful to tell us,[9] she took up the words of the Archangel, declared her to be blessed amongst women, and associated her blessedness with that of the Fruit of her womb.

Not sanctity only, but the highest dignity that can be imagined by the mind of man, must have been the lot of her, who was destined for the office of the Divine Maternity ; and therefore we rejoice in giving to her all the royal titles which the Church assigns her, as Queen of Angels and of all Saints. And great responsibility, too, was connected with the office for which she was destined ; for it was the most important of all charges that was entrusted to her, when the Eternal Father made her the Mother and the keeper of His own Son. And the most painful suffering also must have accompanied her destiny, as it was her lot, from the time that she became the Mother of One who was to redeem the world by suffering, to go about with her heart pierced with a sword of sorrow, from the day in which she heard the pro-

[6] Morris, *Jesus, Son of Mary*, vol. ii. p. 146, note.
[7] Luke i. 6. [8] Matt. xi. 11. [9] Luke i. 41.

phecy of Simeon, till the day in which she gave up the mangled remains of her Son to be laid in His sepulchre. Such was the destiny of Mary, Mother of God. How was it fulfilled?

II. It was upon the happy day of her birth that she entered personally upon the office of fulfilling the destiny marked out for her. She had before that time lived in prophecy; but now she appears upon the scene of the world, and the flesh, from which the Redeemer of mankind was to derive His own redeeming flesh, and the precious Blood which He was to shed for our sins, is now visible, and the person of the Mother of God becomes a positive reality. The great coming event of the advent of the Messias is casting its shadow before it; or rather a light begins to show itself which indicates the close approach of the day of mercy. What joy does not this day give to the whole universe! for so the Church tells us in the antiphon of the *Magnificat* for the festival of the Birth of the ever-blessed Mother of God.

There is joy and glory in Heaven, as well as upon earth, at this birth. The Eternal Father, who at the time of the Conception of the Child now born had made that Conception Immaculate, having, through the foreknowledge of the death and merits of the Son to Whom she was destined to be the Mother, kept from her the stain of sin which affects other children of Adam, rejoices and receives an increase of accidental glory, as He looks upon His own fair daughter, now numbered amongst His visible creatures, and receiving a name inspired by Himself, and indicative of her honourable office. He knows how His glory and His attributes are to be promoted and brought into prominence through that very flesh, on which He now looks down with complacency. He sees the Mother of His own Son, and He sees her with joy.

And the Son of the Eternal Father, one with Him in substance and in will, dwelling in the bosom of the Father, but eager for the time to come when He is to assume an outward form, and to fulfil the act of obedience and sacrifice for which He had already offered Himself, He looks upon that infant and knows who she is, and what is the destiny which she is now commencing outwardly to fulfil. From that flesh He is one day to receive His own. He is to repose for nine months within that body; He is to be nourished through it, and in His future infancy is to be nursed and carried about with the tenderest love and maternal care. And the Holy Spirit, through whose coöperation with that body the mystery already designed is to be accomplished, looks on His own spouse, and does what St. Paul tells us Christ did to His Church, when He chose her as His spouse.[10] He loves and preserves

[10] Eph. v. 27.

her without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, keeps her holy and without blemish, and throws around her the richest clothing of grace, adding to what had already been bestowed upon her at the moment of her being conceived without sin.

And the holy Angels, always active and rejoicing at whatever concerns the glory of God and the spiritual welfare of mankind, to whom had already been given the order which they are waiting to obey, to adore the First-begotten Son upon His entrance into the world,[11] are filled with joy, now that they witness the closer approach of the day manifested to them beforehand, and recognise their own Queen and the Mother of Him, whose glory and rights they had defended against Lucifer and his rebellious host. There was joy therefore throughout Heaven, when that event occurred which the Church is now solemnising in the Festivals of to-day, in honour of the birth and the name of Mary, Mother of God. The Church upon earth is always of one mind and spirit with the Church in Heaven, and so she is to-day.

And when the Church is celebrating with such joy the birth of our Blessed Lady, may she not point to days on which this same event must have been celebrated upon earth, when the destiny of Mary had been more fully accomplished, and when she had been crowned with the joy of Maternity? Let us pass over in our thoughts to the days which were being spent after the message of the Archangel Gabriel, the Visitation to Elizabeth, the great event of Bethlehem, the flight into Egypt, and the return home after those days of exile. Let me take you to the house of Nazareth, and ask how was that day spent there, which we are commemorating to-day. Was there, do you think, no interchange of affection between Child and Mother, as each year brought round the period which the Church fixes for us at this time? Did the Child Jesus know His own Mother's birthday? And knowing it, could He have allowed each eighth day of September, or its corresponding day in the calendar of that time, to pass without any manifestation of love upon His part? That birthdays were celebrated, we have an instance on the occasion of the beheading of St. John Baptist, which occurred when the wicked Herod was celebrating his birthday with great feasting.[12] And although in the holy and quiet Home of Nazareth, there would have been another mode of commemorating such a day as the birthday which, the Church tells us, has heralded joy throughout the whole world, yet we feel it would have been thought of, and that some interchange of affection would have been made on such an occasion.

[11] Heb. i. 6; Ps. xcvi. 7. [12] Matt. xiv. 6.

We may, then, imagine how on that day, as each year would bring it round, our dear Lord would go early in the morning to collect the most beautiful flowers which the fields and gardens of Nazareth could supply, and would place them as an offering by His Mother's side. We remember how He once proved His love for the pure flowers which grew in apparent wildness in the fields. *Consider the lilies of the field*, He said, and He defied Solomon in all his glory to equal their beauty; for they typified the virginal purity of His own Mother, and therefore He valued them so much. May He not then, on her birthday, have presented His Mother with such a simple but loving offering, as an expression of the feeling which every child bears towards her who begat him? I speak to you who know what is a mother's and a child's love: a love so pure, and so ennobled because it was experienced by the Mother of our Redeemer and her Son. St. Paul attributes it as a fault to the heathens, that they were *without affection*:[13] surely, we cannot imagine that our Divine Lord shared their fault in regard to His own Mother.

And did she not upon her part deserve His affection, and therefore receive such signs of it as this day would suggest? Had she not done, and was she not doing, and still holding herself ready even to the end, certainly a bitter end, to do the work of a Mother? Her life, in connexion with Him, had not been one of undisturbed peace. She felt in Bethlehem all the joys of a Mother: did not the poverty and privation of that poor stable make her also feel the sorrows and anxieties of a Mother? We can picture to ourselves the retired Home of Nazareth as the perfection of domestic happiness, but it had been preceded by the exile into Egypt; and with all its happiness, like Bethlehem it knew its anxieties too. For if it was true of the Son, as the Psalmist said of Him: *I am poor and in labours from my youth*, the Mother must have had her share in that poverty, and in the labours necessary to struggle against it. The greater the sufferings of an infant, the more does it cling to its mother; and as suffering was the lot of the Infant Jesus, there was an additional reason for His giving the greater sign of love to her, who nursed Him through all the dangers and wants of those early years. We feel, then, that the Church has a good example before her in celebrating with great joy the happy day of the birth of the Blessed Mother of God.

The destiny, therefore, of her whose birth and name we are celebrating, and the fulfilment of that destiny, make this to be a day of joy, and we gladly obey the voice of the Church, who bids

[13] Rom. i. 31.

us enter into the due spirit of its celebration. With God Himself, with the Incarnate Word, with the Holy Angels, with the whole Church upon earth, we unite in the feelings of joy which we cannot resist, and which we do well to encourage. On every Festival of the ever-blessed Virgin Mother, the Church always bears in mind the connexion between Mary and Jesus. She was destined for this connexion, and she was faithful to all that it implied. We cannot forget or overlook what the Church wishes us to remember and to value. Gladly, then, will we join in her offering of praise upon this day to her, in whose honour we are celebrating these Festivals, and express ourselves in the antiphon which each day is sung throughout the world: 'Thy birth, O Virgin Mother of God, hath proclaimed joy to the whole world: for from thee has risen the sun of justice, Christ our God; who, freeing us from the curse, brought blessing upon us, and conquering death hath given to us everlasting life.'

SERMON LVI.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON HUMILITY.

If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

It is a most important and practical truth which St. Paul conveys to us in these words which I have cited from this day's Epistle. It is a truth which is at the very root of all practical Christianity. *Practical*, I say, because it is sometimes thought that Humility, which is the virtue here inculcated by the holy Apostle, is merely a kind of speculative virtue: one in favour of which a great deal can be imagined and said which is beautiful and true: one which, as an ascetical virtue, is connected with the religious state, or is to be observed and practised by those whom Almighty God is calling to an heroic degree of sanctity, but which cannot be expected from ordinary Christians, who have to deal with their fellow men, and who are living in the midst of the great realities of the world. To a certain extent we may admit what is here said. It is quite true that Humility is a virtue of which many beautiful and true things may be said; and for this reason these things ought to be attended to, because especially the beautiful and true things have been said by such holy persons who have practised the virtue, and have thereby attained to and have proved their sanctity, and on this account what has been said deserves the best attention. It is quite true also that Humility is a virtue, which is intended particularly for the practice of Saints; but who is there that would be so untrue to his own interests as to say or think that God does not intend him to be a Saint? All Christians are called to be Saints: so St. Paul in the first of his Epistles says: *To all that are at Rome, the beloved of God, called to be Saints.*[1] If we do not try to become Saints, what is to become of us?

Let us, therefore, look this virtue of Humility in the face in a practical manner, and then we shall see its philosophy and its

[1] Rom. i. 7.

truth ; and amongst the many beautiful and true things that can be said of it, we shall acknowledge this as one : that Humility is associated intimately and necessarily with all virtue, and its opposite, Pride, with all sin : that Humility is connected with peace, Pride with unhappiness. So that if we really wish to work our way towards our perfection here below, and our reward hereafter, we must undertake the practice of Humility ; and thus show that by understanding its nature, we admit it to be not a mere speculative virtue, but the most practical of all virtues. Let us, then, study our lesson, for it well deserves our best and most earnest attention.

I. That Humility is at the root of all virtue, as Pride is of all sin, is one of the beautiful truths which, we have said, are uttered in favour of this virtue. And we might, even before we come to define and to examine into the nature of Humility, have so expected from the prominence which is given to it in the Holy Gospel. The Incarnation of the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, which is the great Mystery of the Gospel, is the act of Humility exercised by God Himself. How is this, and how can it be? Can we imagine it to be possible that He, the greatest of all Beings, infinite in every perfection, supreme Lord of the Universe, in whose hands and in submission to whose Will are all things in Heaven and on earth, of Whom we cannot think without being awed by the idea of His greatness, that even He can humble Himself? And yet did He not do so in the Mystery of the Incarnation? Who is it that became man, except He who was God? And how did He become man? Listen to St. Paul writing under the influence of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost : *Being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God : but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross.*[2] God humbling Himself : the Eternal taking upon Himself a beginning : the Lord of all becoming a servant : the Author of life becoming subject to death! Such is the act of Humility on the part of God : such is the Incarnation.

And how truly in keeping with the motive which dictated it are all the details of this mystery! In coming into the world, our Divine Lord would be born in a state of poverty. He lived a life of poverty, being from His youth and upwards always poor and in labours. He led a life of obedience, and obedience is an outward proof of inward humility. His Mother, though of royal descent, was a poor virgin of Nazareth ; and we see her poverty

[2] Phil. ii. 6-8.

and want of means in Bethlehem, and in the Presentation in the Temple, where her offering was that of the poor. When He came to choose His companions and fellow-labourers, He went amongst the poor and those on whom the proud world looked down. St. Paul describes their character when he said: *There are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and the things that are not, that He might bring to naught the things that are.*[3]

During His active ministry, when He went about doing good, and teaching lessons of perfection by word and example, we constantly have proofs of His love for humility and of the great store He set by that virtue. Hence His denouncements of the proud Pharisees whom He condemned so severely for their seeking of the approval and commendation of the world. Hence His parables, from more than one of which He draws the moral with which He concludes that of the Pharisee and the Publican: *Every one that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be humbled.* To those that came after Him, He gave the instruction: *Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.*[4] And when He wished to silence the pride of those who were ambitious about the highest places, He calls forth a little child, and placing him in the midst of them, He declares that unless they all become as little children, the kingdom of heaven is not for them.[5] Thus He speaks from the abundance of His heart: He fixes the principle by which He would have His followers to be regulated. He came to redeem us by humility, and He will have humility to be prominent amongst His children. The condition of becoming high in His kingdom is to become low; and the last and lowest were to become the first and highest. Such is the principle everywhere inculcated in the Gospel.

And as our most merciful Saviour came into this world, and humbled Himself, and became Man in order to atone for sin, we shall see that that which was atoned for by His humiliation was caused by Pride, the vice opposed to Humility. He came not to atone for the sins of angels who fell, but of man who imitated the fallen angels in their proud disobedience. When Lucifer and his rebellious followers, *who kept not their principality, but forsook their own habitation,*[6] were driven from heaven, it was because

[3] 1 Cor. i. 26-28.
[4] Matt. xi. 29.
[5] Ibid. xviii. 3.
[6] Jude 6.

they were unwilling to humble themselves and to adore the Incarnate Word, as the Fathers of the Church assure us. And when in Paradise our first parents had a command imposed upon them, they sinned through pride. Almighty God wished them to obey, and by the humility which they would have manifested in their obedience, to confirm themselves in His friendship and secure their salvation. But the devil, who had himself fallen through pride, tempted them to disobey, and to disobey through the same motive which had actuated himself in his rebellion. He incited them to aim at a state higher than that which was their due: they were but human creatures, but he told them that if they would disobey they would be something higher: *You shall be as Gods*,[7] was the flattering promise. They yielded to the temptation: they were not humble: they were proud, and we know by a too miserable experience what was the consequence. Man, through pride, wished to make himself God, and he fell. God, through humility, made Himself man, and redeemed him who had fallen. Thus Pride brought sin and death into the world: Humility brought pardon, and gained the redemption and resurrection of man. This is the Gospel, the good tidings of the Incarnation.

From what we learn, therefore, from the holy Gospel of the efficacy of Humility, this virtue commends itself to us, and we are led antecedently to admire it and to admit its power. Now we may move another step forward, and proceed to examine into the nature of this virtue, and to define it.

II. The true definition of Humility is suggested to us by the words of St. Paul, which we have taken as our text from to-day's Epistle: *If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.* Humility really consists in convincing ourselves that we are exactly what God knows us to be, and nothing else. Therefore it implies nothing forced or exaggerated. Humility tells us the truth: it does not flatter us, and it does not lower us below the reality in which the Almighty has constituted us.

To prove this we have only to consider what Pride is, which is the contradictory of Humility. Pride consists in esteeming ourselves beyond what God esteems us, and therefore it at once implies that which is contrary to truth. So the Devil, who fell from heaven through Pride, is also called a liar. Here is what our Divine Lord says of him who rebelled and would not humble himself to obey: *He stood not in the truth; because the truth is not in him. . . . He is a liar and the father of lies.*[8] And our Lord, who came to conquer him and his work by Humility, says

[7] Gen. iii. 5. [8] John viii. 44.

of Himself: *I am the Truth.*[9] And when our first parents fell so miserably through Pride, the tempter led them into their sin by telling them what was false: *You shall be as Gods*, and made them believe that they would become something more than God had made them, and what He knew them to be. Analyse any act of pride of which you yourself may have been guilty, or to which you may have been tempted, and you cannot help finding in it the presence of falsehood. You have at such a time given yourself a false character: you have been trying to gain credit for what you know you do not really possess: you put on an appearance that you may stand well before men; but the fact of having to put on such an appearance is nothing more than an effort to conceal faults which you know you possess, and to feign good qualities which you know you have not.

When the Pharisees sought to gain esteem from men, they put on an outward show of a piety which existed not in their hearts, and which our Father who seeth in secret could not recognise. They were making themselves appear what God knew them not to be, and thus falsehood went hand in hand with their pride. In heresy also, pride and falsehood are blended together in the act which constitutes it. To refuse to believe the truth, and to profess belief in what is false, is the material part of an heretical act, and this is where heresy is an act of falsehood. To reject the authority which is appointed to teach us, and to set up one's own judgment against that of a divinely-constituted teacher, is the formal part of heresy, and this is an act of pride. Believing upon authority, which is the motive of faith, is an act of humility: it is submitting the intellect to the guidance of a Divine messenger. Professing to believe upon private judgment, which is the motive of heresy, is an act of pride: it is the refusal of submission where God demands it, and it is proclaiming independence where we ought to practise obedience. Thus again Humility and Truth are associated, while pride and falsehood are joined in an unholy union.

Humility, according to the teaching of St. Bernard, in order to be real, must reside in the understanding and in the heart. The understanding is the power of our soul which deals with truth; the will has its seat in the heart. In order to be truly humble, we must by our understanding know ourselves to be what we truly are, and then we cannot be proud. In the order of nature what are we? We are creatures, made out of nothing; and so we have nothing to boast of as to our origin. Until the few short years ago when our life began, we were nothing, and

[9] John xiv. 6.

we had been so for the whole eternity which preceded our existence. If it had pleased God to have so left us, we should still be nothing: not an object that could be seen, or known, or thought of. *If any one*, then, as to his origin, *think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.* My life is not my own, it is God's who gave it to me. My possessions are not my own, they are lent to me by Him. My gifts of soul are not my own, as if I were justified to use them independently of Him from whom I hold them. To pretend that any of these are really my own, is to rob God of His right as Creator: it is an act of falsehood as well as of insubordination: it is making myself a creator, whereas I am but a poor creature.

But is not my free will my own? Does not the name which it bears, of being free, imply that I have dominion over it, and am at liberty to use it as I will? It is true that I am free in its exercise, but who gave it to me, and who made it free? Not I myself, but God. And who helps and guides me in its free use? It is God by His Grace. For unless the free will, free as it is, act in conformity with Grace, no meritorious act can be performed. And when by thus acting we please our God and acquire merit, we can only say with St. Paul: *Yet not I, but the Grace of God with me.*[10] But if we resist Grace, as we are free to do, and go against its direction, what is the result but sin? So that all that we can boast of being able to do of ourselves is that we can sin, and rob our soul of the gifts of God. *What hast thou that thou hast not received? and if thou hast received, why dost thou boast as if thou hadst not received?*[11]

And in the order of Grace what are you except what it has pleased God in the free gift of His Grace to make you? You have no reason to boast, like the Pharisee, that you are better than other men. If you may have been preserved from outward greater sins, it is God's Grace, not your own merits, that have sheltered you. Compare yourself with the angels, and how poor and slow is your fidelity and fervour! Think of what Saints have done: martyrs, hermits, virgins, and all those who made great sacrifices for God, and by many tribulations worked their way towards Heaven: and what are you in comparison with them? If you have once lost God's Grace by deliberate grievous sin, and perhaps you have cause to remember having done so, as you look back upon your past life, you have a perpetual cause for humiliation, and may well cry out, and most truly, with the penitent Psalmist: *But I am a worm and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people.*[12] It does not require any forced

[10] 1 Cor. xv. 10. [11] Ibid. iv. 7. [12] Ps. xxi.

reasoning to convince you how true all this is. All that is required of you is to think, and this truth of your nothingness will come clearly before you.

When your understanding is thus convinced, it is not so hard to move the heart towards acts of humility. For we must be consistent; and as humility is allied with truth, we must be willing to manifest outwardly what we feel inwardly. And when we thus live up to our convictions, we shall find how truly and effectually this virtue will control our whole life; and that so far from being merely a speculative virtue, or one demanded only of those who are called to the higher ways of Perfection in the religious state, it is the most practical of virtues, and is most fertile in good results with every Christian.

III. What are these results? Give me any one as humble as the Blessed Virgin, says the author of the *Spiritual Combat*, and of such an one I would say that he could never sin. Most true indeed it is that our sinlessness and fidelity will be in proportion to our Humility. The first result of our Humility will be our dutifulness to God. We shall fully recognise our position as His creature, and our nothingness before Him. We shall have no difficulty in submitting our reason to what Faith in His word demands, and instead of setting up proudly our own judgment against the voice of an authority which speaks in His name, we shall accept every truth with the confidence of the youthful Samuel, and our attitude will be that of a child: *Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.*[13] We shall gladly exercise our Hope in our Creator, and acknowledge by prayer our dependence upon Him. For who are those who do not pray? It is they who do not feel their wants, and therefore do not express them. And who are they who, when they pretend to pray, gain nothing from God? *He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.*[14] And the humble man shows in the most practical manner his Love for God; because he obeys Him; and this satisfies our Divine Lord's test of Love: *If you love Me, keep My commandments.*[15]

In all the requirements of religion, the humble man is found ever faithful and constant. He achieves a victory over the two great obstacles to union with God, pride and indolence; for *the obedient man shall speak of victory*,[16] and the humble man is obedient. Who are they who avoid the Sacraments? It is the proud and indolent, who are unwilling to humble and exert themselves even in a matter so sacred and essential. Who are they who stay away from sermons and religious instructions? It is the

[13] 1 Kings iii. 10.
[14] James iv. 6; Prov. iii. 34.
[15] John xiv. 15.
[16] Prov. xxi. 28.

self-satisfied proud, who think such practices are good for the poor and children (that is to say the humble), but not necessary for them. Who are they who refuse acts of mercy for God's sake to His own poor afflicted ones? It is the proud, who disdain all intercourse with those beneath them, and know not therefore what it is to sympathise with suffering.

A second result of Humility will be the observance of that second commandment of God which enjoins the love of our neighbour; a commandment which, in some of its most practical obligations, is so much broken by the proud man. Who is it that, when his neighbour offends him and incurs his displeasure, is so unwilling to forgive him, and to look upon him still as a brother? It is the proud man who cannot bring himself to stoop down to this truly Christian act, but even boasts of harbouring resentment. It is the same man who, again, if he has injured another and ought to ask forgiveness, refuses the duty, because pride forbids him. Ask yourselves the question, my dear brethren, why are these unhappy differences perpetuated, which ought never to exist between Christians, except that the want of humility is the cause of their origin and of their continuance. If you were humble, and saw yourself as God sees you: if you admitted your nothingness, and felt that you ought to be looked upon as the last, the least, and the lowest of all, would you thus stand upon rights which are not yours, and refuse to your brother rights which are his? He has a claim to your love and your forgiveness, and you wrong him if you refuse him what is his. Certainly, there can be no doubt that humility will make you pray with more fervour and sincerity for a forgiveness of your sins, and will enable you to state to the God whose mercy you implore, that you ask for His pardon, because you have not been too proud to grant pardon unto others.

The blessing which will be brought to yourself is the third happy result of Humility. This is a direct consequence of Humility promised by our dear Lord, when He says: *Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls.*[17]

Compare the inward feelings of a proud and a humble man: which has the greater interior peace? Do the jealousies, feelings of envy and ambition, resentment and desire of an undeserved esteem, which are ever reigning in the heart of a proud man, bring rest to his soul? Who is so much despised by others as the man whom we know to be vain, proud, and self-conceited? And who is so easily satisfied as the truly humble man? All is good to him, and better even than what he feels he ought to receive. He

[17] Matt. xi. 29.

is at peace with God and his neighbour, and therefore with himself. The world even respects him ; or if it oppose him, it cannot disturb his peace. On this point, indeed, the world seems to agree with Almighty God : it gives its favour and respect to the humble, but it resists and despises the proud.

Now, my dear brethren, let us all make an act of Humility, by praying for Humility. Let not us, who are servants, be above our Master. He was humble, and set us an example that we should herein follow His footsteps. He gained the glory due to His Name, because He first humbled Himself. His Mother was humble, and it was because God had regard to her Humility, that the Church has ever had reason to proclaim her as Blessed amongst women. Pray to God that He will let you see and admit the truth about yourself: that He will prevent you by His Grace from thinking yourself to be something, whereas you are nothing. And when He shall have vouchsafed to give you light to see yourself as He sees you, that light will bring truth with it, and that truth will be Humility.

SERMON LVII.

THIRD SUNDAY IN SEPTEMBER.

SEVEN SORROWS OF B.V.M.

There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.

It is the beloved disciple, St. John the Evangelist, who describes the touching event briefly recorded in the Gospel of this Festival. He was an eye-witness and an actor in the scene. We see him, as we picture to ourselves the tragic event of Calvary, standing upon one side of the Cross, Mary on the other, and Jesus dying between them. It was an hour of the deepest sorrow: an hour of humiliation: it was an hour in which there was an apparent triumph of the world over the Gospel, and a seeming disappointment of all the fair promises which He, who was dying in such ignominy, had frequently made, that His cause would at last triumph, and that He would eventually succeed in gaining the whole world to Himself.

There was, indeed, much cause for sorrow in that hour. There was the state of the Son, who was dying in the midst of such bitter torments, having been led like a sheep to the slaughter, wounded so as to verify literally the prophecy of Isaias: *From the sole of the foot to the top of the head there is no soundness in Him: wounds and bruises and swelling sores.*[1] Then there was the afflicted Mother: the most privileged indeed of all the daughters of Eve, whose lot all others of those daughters would have envied, because to her fell the lot of bringing forth the One, to whom all had looked forward as the bringer of peace to an offending and a punished world. And yet what was her state upon that day of sorrow when she saw her Son, who had come into the world in poverty and suffering, leaving it in such humiliating and sorrowing circumstances? And the beloved disciple, St. John, who has recorded for us the sorrows of that day: what was his state in those last hours of the life of One whom he had loved so much, whose Divinity he recognised and

[1] Is. i. 6.

was one day to proclaim so gloriously in his Gospel and Revelations? And Magdalene, the great conquest of Him who had come to call sinners to repentance, and who by His power in converting souls was to change sinners into saints, how could she have felt in those hours of the humiliation of Him, whom she had learnt to love but too late, and whom she had offended too long? Did it not add to the sorrow of those hours, that there should be in the eyes of the world such an apparent failure of His cause? Where was the sign of its success, when He who was to conquer the world was conquered by the world, was crucified and dying without hope of rescue, by the hands and the power of His enemies? Where were its defenders? Where were its conquests? Where was the conquered world, and the evidence of the truth of His saying to His poor timid followers: *Have confidence; I have overcome the world?*[2] What we read of that day does not seem reassuring, or a fulfilment of that declaration; for what we read is only this: *There stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother, and His Mother's sister Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene, . . . and the Disciple standing whom He loved.* Those were His only friends: three women and one man; and all the rest who stood by were enemies and deriders.

Yet, my dear brethren, the Church to-day is not ashamed of that day's work, nor of those who stood by to witness it. She celebrates the event of that day in a Festival of joy. She interrupts the usual sequence of the Sundays, and bids us to-day, on the happy Sabbath day of the New Testament, to celebrate what she brings before us in the short but full Gospel of this Festival, the share which the Holy Mother took in an act which brought such joy to the world, though at the expense of such sorrow. The Gospel principle is carried out in the event which we are commemorating. The seed must die first, and then produce its fruit. There is humiliation enough, indeed, but it is a humiliation which is to be rewarded, and which has been rewarded beyond all proportion. There is the Cross first, but the Church reminds us to-day that the Crown has followed; and we are bidden, by a voice and an authority which we gladly obey, to think of the sorrows of her who was first of all the Mother of sorrows, and afterwards became the Queen of Glory. Let us to-day, with more leisure, study the lesson of this Festival. It is the second time in the year that we celebrate it. Once before, on the Friday in Passion Week, we stood by the side of the Cross with Mary and John, but it was then just on the eve of a week

[2] John xvi. 33.

in which we were making up our minds to think of nothing else but sorrow; now we can look more cheerfully upon these sorrows of the Mother of our dear Lord, and see them in the results which they brought with them to herself and to us.

I. First we may consider what she suffered. The Church, who never forgets the sorrows of the Mother of her Founder, but with a loving heart notices what an unsympathising soul would lose sight of, records the seven chief occasions of her suffering in the Festival of to-day. Three of these occasions belong to the early Life of our dear Lord: four to the time of His Passion. The first sorrow or dolour commemorates the event of the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple, when Simeon foretold His contradictions, and told the Mother, of the sword which was to pierce her own soul. From that moment she began to experience that deep grief, which the anticipation of certain suffering always brings with it. The second sorrow was occasioned by the Flight into Egypt, with all its attendant circumstances of fear and privations. The third was experienced during the three days' loss of the Child, on their return from Jerusalem to Nazareth, when He was of the age of twelve years. Then we pass on to the events of the Passion, the whole of which period was indeed the time when the sword of which Simeon had spoken was doing its painful work. But the Church selects four details which are commemorated in the last four of the Seven Dolours. The fourth, then, of the seven tells us of the painful meeting of the Son and Mother after He had been condemned to death, and was carrying His Cross up the hill of Calvary. The fifth is that which is expressly mentioned in to-day's Gospel, when the afflicted Mother stood by the side of the Cross, and witnessed the Death of her Son. The sixth records the taking down of the Sacred Body from the Cross, and its being reposed in His Mother's arms. And the seventh and last bids us contemplate the Burial of our dear Lord in the presence of His Mother.

The sorrow which the Church places in chief prominence before us to-day in the Gospel, and in the touching Prose of the *Stabat Mater*, is that central sorrow of the Mother standing by the Cross whilst her Son, in the midst of such torments, was dying upon it. What must not her sufferings have been at such a time? If the Church asks so beautifully in the *Stabat*: 'Where is the man who would not weep, if he saw the Mother of Christ sorrowing with her Son?' may we not ask: What mother is there who could be exempt from the most acute pain, if she were doomed to attend her son in such circumstances? What made her be present at such a time? Was that the fitting place for a

mother? How could she have commanded the fortitude necessary for such a fearful trial to a mother's feelings? We read of the instance of one mother, who shrunk from the trial of seeing her child die in the midst of pain. It was poor Agar, the wife of Abraham, and mother of Ismael. When driven away from her home through the rivalry of Sarah, she took her child with her into the desert, and when she had exhausted the little supply she had provided for his support, and she felt that he was dying of thirst, she laid him under a tree, and ran off to a distance, saying: *I will not see the boy die.*[3] But this was not the case with her who has deserved the title of Queen of Martyrs. She was prepared for the trial of those last hours of her Son's Life, and would be faithful to a mother's duty even to the end.

I have reminded you that the first of her Seven Sorrows was the prophecy of Simeon, that a sword of grief should pierce her own soul, especially at the time when her Son should be set up as a sign to be contradicted. Therefore she foreknew what was to be the history of that Good Friday. This was the most lasting of her Sorrows. In their hours together at Nazareth we can imagine how on each previous Good Friday, the anniversary by anticipation of the great day of Redemption, they would rehearse the events which were to occur when the prophecies which had spoken of Him were to be accomplished. Oftentimes would they have read together the prophecy of Isaias, which said of Him upon whom His Mother was then looking with greater love than any other had ever looked upon a child: *There is no beauty in Him nor comeliness, and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness; . . . despised, the most abject of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, . . . we have thought Him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. . . . He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and He shall not open His mouth.*[4] She was prepared, therefore, for that day's trial, and like the valiant woman she braced herself up to take her share in His sufferings; and she would not accept the honour of Maternity to such a Son, without fulfilling the duties which she knew that that honour entailed.

Her sufferings were intense at that hour, because she was the Mother to Him who was dying by her side. Our Blessed Lord was really and truly man; and she was really and truly His Mother. Whatever kind nature in its sympathies between a mother and a child suggests to any mother, was suggested to her on that occasion. Every wound which had been inflicted upon

[3] Gen. xxi. 16. [4] Is. liii. 2-7.

Him was inflicted upon her also. If St. Paul, in his meditations upon the Cross, was so drawn to our dear Lord that he could say: *With Christ I am nailed to the Cross*, much more truly could His own Mother say the same as she stood close to His side. And if we even, at so great a distance, and with hearts so cold and so unloving, cannot think of the anguish of those three hours' Agony on the Cross without being moved, what must have been the case with her, so loving and devoted a Mother, when she saw the awful reality enacted in her presence!

Moreover, she was a Virgin-Mother, and that gave her a double share of sorrow. How is this, my dear brethren? It is for this reason. In ordinary parents nature divides the parental care between two persons. Each has a share, and in proportion to that share relieves the other. You know that she was upon earth the only parent to our dear Lord. The good St. Joseph had been given to her as a protector to her virginity, and shared in some degree the anxieties which accompanied the first years of the Life of the Holy Child. But yet it was not the same as if he had been actual parent, and as if nature had supplied him with what every father does receive, as a natural gift of sympathy with his own flesh and blood. None could have been fitter for the high office for which he had been appointed than the venerable patriarch St. Joseph. But he was dead: he had gone to his reward long before the time of the Passion; and the protection which he had given in Bethlehem, Egypt, and Nazareth was wanting at Calvary. Mary, the Mother, was then a widow, and had no one to share her solicitude and her anguish; and therefore her sorrow pressed upon her with double weight.

And she was Mother to such a Son! to One whom she loved as no son ever could have been loved before. For although nature inspires into every mother a love for him whom she has begotten, the love is greater in proportion to the goodness of the child. Sometimes it happens that a son is no comfort to a mother: he is an anxiety and a source of trial, and his removal by death may even be a relief, painful it may be, but yet a relief to a mother whom he ought to have solaced, but has only afflicted. But what was the perfection of Jesus! How we love Him, who are so unworthy of such a privilege! But how must she have loved Him, who was herself so capable of loving, and who knew so intimately what was the love of His Sacred Heart. Goodness is always an object of love. Who ever approached Him in goodness? And who was ever loved as He was, especially by His own best and fondest of mothers? What, then, must have been her sorrow, as she stood mourning by the side of His Cross!

Well might she exclaim: *O all ye who pass by, stay and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!*[5]

II. Mary, then, did suffer, and suffer intensely in all her dolours. But we may, perhaps, be inclined to ask the question, why should she have been required to suffer so much, or even at all? As sin brought suffering into the world, ought not she who was absolutely sinless, to have been exempt from this consequence of sin? But no, my dear brethren. She was exempt from the stain of sin, but it was God's will that she should not be dispensed from suffering. Three reasons existed why she should suffer.

First, it was fitting that she should suffer because she was the Mother of a suffering Son. Can we imagine it otherwise? He who came to redeem us came without sin, but He came on purpose to take upon Himself the punishment due to our sins, so that by His stripes we might be saved. *We have not a high-priest,* says St. Paul, *who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin.*[6] She was His Mother, and being the Mother of the Man of Sorrows, how could it be that, having the heart of a mother, her life could have been anything but a life of sorrow? If Jeremias wept so bitterly over Jerusalem because of his love for that city, why should not she who so loved her Son, weep and lament with Him? And we see that all the seven of her dolours concern Him. And what value did not this attach to her sufferings? For you know how often, when we have to endure the slight pains or trials to which we are subjected, we are exhorted to unite them with those of our dearest Lord. We look at a Crucifix, and think of Him, who bore so much and with such patience, and we are encouraged. So with her, all that she suffered was with Him and for Him, and hence we see the fitness of her sorrows.

It was fitting also that she should suffer for her own sake. For she had to earn her salvation, and her future glory, and this was to be gained on the condition of suffering. We cannot forget how nobly St. Paul speaks of the great glory due to the Holy Name of JESUS, and to Him who bore that Name: but he tells us how that glory was purchased: *He humbled Himself, and He became obedient even to the death of the Cross, therefore*[7] did He acquire His Glory. And the same truth was declared by our Lord Himself just after His Resurrection, when, to two disciples He affirmed the principle: *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so enter into His Glory?*[8] Gladly, then, did she accept the condition which was to result in her future glory in

[5] Lam. i. 12.
[6] Heb. iv. 15.
[7] Phil. ii. 8.
[8] Luke xxiv. 26.

Heaven. She was to be next to her Son in that kingdom, and she would be nearest to Him in suffering here below. The joy of St. Paul in his tribulations could not equal hers. She could say more truly than he: *We glory also in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope, and hope confoundeth not.*[9] In her case, after the Cross was to come the Crown, and she would be no exception to the rule, that *by many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.*

And for our sake also it was fitting that she should suffer. Our Divine Lord suffered for us for two reasons: to redeem us, and to set us an example. Mary did not suffer for us in order to redeem us, for that she could not do. The One Mediator alone could satisfy the justice of God for our sins. But as our Mother, she could set us an example; she could show us with what fortitude we ought to bear our sufferings, and associate them, as she did hers, with those of her Son. And although she could not merit for us our salvation, yet indirectly through her sufferings she has made her help in our regard of much greater efficacy. For if we believe what St. James tells us in his lessons upon prayer, that we ought to *pray for one another*, and that *the continual prayer of the just man availeth much*,[10] in proportion as she by her patience in tribulation made herself more acceptable in the sight of God, so has her intercessory power increased before the throne of God, in behalf of those for whom her Son shed the precious Blood which He had received from her.

When, then, we remember the result of those hours of suffering at the foot of the Cross, we can view this festival in the light in which the Church celebrates it. It is even a festival of joy, and is celebrated upon a Sunday. In Passion-week, when we had then observed a festival in honour of these sorrows, there was no room for joy; it was on the Friday before Good Friday, and we were too much taken up in those days with the mysteries of the Cross, to anticipate the joy which was withheld from us until the Easter solemnity. But not so to-day. We take the sufferings of our Mother for our contemplation, but are not to dwell upon them alone, but to encourage ourselves by the blessings which attended them in her own respect, and in our regard also.

Consider, then, in as lively a manner as possible, the great scene of Calvary, but view it as St. John describes it to you. We cannot conceive the Mystery of Bethlehem without the presence of the Mother, and St. John will not allow us to contemplate Calvary without her. It is to her and of her, the dying Son addresses the last words He spoke to any creature. His last legacy

[9] Rom. v. 5. [10] James v. 16.

bequeaths His Mother to the disciple whom He loved, and the disciple to His Mother. And after that He speaks no more, except to His Father, to Whom He commends His Spirit when all is consummated. It is a comfort and an encouragement to us to see poor Magdalene there also. Not a word of rebuke is addressed to her as she takes up her place by the side of those feet which she had once anointed, kissed, and bathed with tears. Mary does not turn to her and say that it was owing to her and sinners like what she had been, that her Son was then suffering all His torments. No; she had shared her Son's love for penitent sinners, and the presence of Magdalene was one of the mitigations of the sufferings of that day. Here was one soul washed clean so as to have its virginal innocence restored; and to the Refuge of Sinners this brought some relief in that hour of woe.

And we who feel that we have two great graces to pray for, pardon for our past sins, and perseverance in our good resolutions to the end, must to-day ask for them with the fullest confidence that they will not and cannot be refused us. It is through the precious Blood of our dear Saviour that pardon has been purchased for us; and it is through the tears and prayers of His Mother and our Mother, standing by the side of His Cross, that we hope that the gift of final perseverance will be granted to us. *Forget not the sorrows of thy mother*,[11] is the command of Almighty God given to us by the wise man, and it is a command which even nature bids us respect and obey. We can imagine her who stood by so bravely witnessing the martyrdom of her Son, addressing each of us, as did that noble mother of whom we read in the second book of Machabees, who witnessed the execution of her six elder sons, and encouraged her seventh and last one to imitate their example and share their reward, and begging us to have pity upon her,[12] and not make ourselves unworthy of an example which we must follow. She was His Mother; but she is ours also. Remember His Blood, and remember her tears; both were shed for us: one to redeem, the others to encourage and assist us. By prayer, by sorrow, and by a good and generous resolution, let us strive to gain the advantage which our station at the foot of the Cross can secure for us, so that we may make ourselves to be of the happy number of those who have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb, and have had the merits of that precious Blood secured and applied to us through the prayers and sorrows of His Mother.

[11] Ecclus. vii. 29. [12] 2 Mach. vii. 27.

SERMON LVIII.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

WATCHING JESUS.

They watched Him.

The fact recorded in the Gospel of this Sunday, of the enemies of our dear Lord watching Him, suggests a lesson which may well be practised by His friends. They watched Him, in order that they might find cause to blame Him; we must watch Him in order to learn lessons from Him, to encourage ourselves to do what we find Him doing, and thus to mould our character upon His. This, indeed, is not the only instance in which we find the enemies of our Blessed Lord watching Him; nor has this act of watching Him even yet ceased. It constantly was going on during His ministry; and it is still constantly going on with regard to those who are continuing His work upon earth. It is well for us to know this, and to bear it in mind. It puts us on our guard, and is a great motive to fidelity; and it suggests to us to do for our encouragement, what those who opposed Him did in order to check the progress of His work.

We will consider how Jesus was watched, and how we ought to watch Him. And then we will apply the same thought to the Church, and see how she is watched by some, and how she ought to be watched by others.

I. What the Pharisees did to our Divine Lord on the occasion recorded for us by the Church to-day, watch Him when He entered the house of one of the chief amongst them, in order that they might bring some charge against Him, is by no means the only instance of their thus acting in His regard. They repeatedly strove to detect Him, in His speech or in His actions, doing something which they might cite as scandalous, and unworthy of one who professed to have come amongst them as a Divine messenger. Sometimes they tried Him upon the question of loyalty to temporal sovereigns, as they did when they asked Him whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar.[1] Sometimes it was on the

[1] Matt. xxii. 17.

question of a lax or a severe observance of the law of Moses, as when they tried to make Him condemn the poor woman taken in adultery.[2] Sometimes it was about the spirit with which He wished His followers to be animated, as when the lawyer tempted Him by asking what he was to do in order to gain eternal life.[3] And by watching His ways, and observing with whom He associated, they pretended to be scandalised because poor sinners, whom He brought to conversion, engaged so much of His time and attention; as when they said, in an assumed tone of virtuous indignation, *This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.*[4] And they protested also when they saw Him so affectionately receive and pardon the penitent Magdalene.[5] And our Lord was obliged to ask them why they were harbouring evil thoughts against Him,[6] when they heard Him pronounce pardon over the palsied man.

On so many instances had they watched Him, and so much evidence did they feel they had collected, that we find them at the time of His trial heaping charges against Him in such numbers, that Pilate says to Him, *Dost Thou not hear how great testimonies they allege against Thee?*[7] Words that they had heard Him say, or were told He had said by those who watched Him, were distorted into a sense never intended, or even the very contradictory of what He had distinctly said. Such was the case when the two false witnesses brought against Him an accusation, which made so great an impression upon the high-priest, of His having said that He would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days;[8] and when they accused Him of turning away the people from their loyalty, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar.[9]

He, however, was never off His guard, and never ashamed of His words or acts. *Which of you*, He once said to His tempters, *shall convince Me of sin?*[10] And when at the onset of His Passion His enemies, who had been lying in wait for Him, came and seized Him on His leaving the garden of Gethsemane, He alluded to the open way in which He had laboured amongst them: *When I was daily with you in the temple, you did not stretch forth your hands against Me.*[11] And more expressly He pointed to this fact when He condescended before the high-priest to justify Himself, saying, *I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither all the Jews resort; and in secret I have said nothing.*[12]

[2] John viii. 3. [3] Luke x. 25. [4] Ibid. xv. 2.
[5] Ibid. vii. 39. [6] Ibid. v. 22. [7] Matt. xxvii. 13.
[8] Ibid. xxvi. 61. [9] Luke xxiii. 2. [10] John viii. 46.
[11] Luke xxii. 53. [12] John xviii. 20.

He had, indeed, come into the world as the light of the world, and declared Himself to be the truth; and there was nothing that He desired more than that all eyes should be turned upon Him, and that every one should hear the words which He spoke.

Simeon, at the time of His presentation in the temple, had foretold of Him that He should be set up for a sign to be contradicted. He seemed then to be foretelling how His enemies would watch Him, because a sign is that which is observed and watched. Of Him it had also been announced by the Prophets, that in the midst of darkness a great light was to shine, so as to attract the attention of those who would not wilfully blind themselves against its splendour. Speaking of the coming of the future Redeemer, the Psalmist had said, *To the righteous has arisen a light in darkness*;[13] and when the father of the Precursor told of the work which his son, the Baptist, was to do, he said in his canticle that he was to go before the face of the Lord, to prepare His ways, *to enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death*.[14] And the moment that our dear Lord was born, He became an object that could be seen and watched. The gloom of Bethlehem was dispelled by the bright Angels who sang His praises; and of the shepherds who were then watching it is said, *the brightness of God shone about them*.[15] And when the wise men were drawn from a distance to come and adore Him, they were conducted to the place of His birth by the shining of a star, which guided them until it marked out the spot towards which they were directing their steps, *until it came and stood over where the Child was*.[16] Therefore there was nothing secret about our Divine Lord's own conduct. He desired to be watched, and to be seen and known.

He had reason to complain sometimes, indeed, that His followers were not so ready to watch Him as His enemies were. In His Agony in the Garden, when He begged the three companions whom He took with Him to watch with Him, they fell asleep and neglected the duty. The Church in her beautiful Liturgy puts the following expostulation into His mouth, addressed to Peter: 'Do you not see how Judas sleepeth not, but hasteneth to deliver Me up to the Jews?'[17] It is against such a fault that we must learn to guard ourselves, and we must strive to learn zeal and attention from His enemies. For there is a duty of watching Jesus which He requires of us, and which, if properly fulfilled, must bring great blessings with it.

[13] Ps. cxi. [14] Luke i. 79.
[15] Ibid. ii. 9. [16] Matt. ii. 9.
[17] Resp. 3 noct. Matins for Maundy Thursday.

We are to watch our dear Lord by studying the virtues of His Life, and by striving to follow His example. He differs from others who have set themselves up to teach mankind, philosophers, as they are called. They have contented themselves with teaching through their words and writings. They have laid down principles which they strive to prove and to make acceptable to their followers, and thus they have founded a school, and have influenced a greater or smaller circle of believers and admirers. But our Divine Teacher adopted another plan. He taught by example. And when He went about gathering His disciples, and bidding them to follow Him, He intended them not simply to believe the truth of what He told them, but to imitate His example, to do what He did, to practise virtues which they saw in Him, and to hate and avoid what He rejected and condemned. *Learn of Me*, He says on one occasion, *because I am meek and humble of heart.*[18] And on another He says: *I have given you an example, that as I have done, so you do also.*[19]

This principle is constantly impressed upon us by St. Paul, who had studied the Life of our Divine Lord, had endeavoured to conform himself to the character it presented, and urged his children to do what he had done, to watch Jesus, and to follow Him. Twice in his first Epistle to the Corinthians he says to them: *Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.*[20] And many times he holds up his own example, as being a model to others, because he wished to be sincere, and to act upon the Christian principle of forming his character upon that of his own Master, and thus proving that he had a right to ask others to do what he was attempting to do himself. To the Galatians he says: *As many of you as have been baptised in Christ, have put on Christ.*[21] And this watching Christ, and following His example, he declares to be a sign of predestination, as he says to the Romans: *Whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son.*[22] And St. Peter enforces the same, when he exhorted the early Christians to be patient under their trials, saying to them: *Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow His example.*[23] Hence was that old definition of a Christian, recognised and respected in earlier times, as it ought to be now: *a Christian is another Christ.* What do all these lessons mean, but that we must watch our Blessed Lord, study His example, and imitate it by the help of the Grace which He can and will give us?

In many other ways also may we watch our Divine Lord, and

[18] Matt. xi. 29. [19] John xiii. 15. [20] 1 Cor. iv. 16, xi. 1.
[21] Gal. iii. 27. [22] Rom. viii. 29. [23] 1 Pet. ii. 21.

gain the benefit of this watching. We may watch Him, as did those in to-day's Gospel, on the Sabbath-day; and on each Sunday we can urge ourself to enter into the spirit of the Church, as manifested in the portion of the Gospel selected for that day. Tertullian says that 'a Christian is an epitome of the Gospel;'[24] and as each Sunday brings one portion or other of the teaching, or some virtue, or miracle, or merciful act of our dear Saviour before us, we shall have the opportunity of seeing how far we are trying to represent in our own life, what the Life recorded in the Gospel holds out before us. In the same manner we may watch our Divine Model on the various Festivals, and through the motive which each one suggests, exert ourselves to practise the perfection of which those holy days always remind us. The Festivals of the Church are always days of special grace and encouragement. They are days of joy; occasions on which Heaven seems closer to us than at other times, and on which the practice of a good life seems easier, and to be receiving already a portion of its reward. That most devout and practical book, the *Following of Christ*,[25] recommends us to renew our resolutions from Festival to Festival, and on those days to be more than usually diligent in the exercise of good works.

We may very effectually watch our Blessed Lord also by looking devoutly upon the Crucifix. This has been a great devotion of Saints, and has contributed very effectually towards their sanctity. As those who crucified our Redeemer stood around Him, and wagged their heads, and derided Him, watching all the time the awful deed which their own cruel hands had accomplished, and bringing before Him then the recollection of words which He had spoken amongst the people, so ought we to stand or kneel by His side, bow our head in veneration, kiss the marks of His wounds, and remember also many of the words which He spoke about His future Crucifixion: how He would then draw all things to Himself, and would be giving the greatest proof of His love for His friends. The Church is always faithful to this lesson, for you know how she shares St. Paul's love for the Cross, and sets forth Christ crucified constantly before our eyes.[26]

And in the Blessed Sacrament what golden opportunities have we not of watching Jesus residing amongst us, not only on the Sabbath-day, on which most particularly He invites us to join with Him in the eating of bread, in a higher meaning than that which drew Him into the house of the Pharisee, but every day, as we shall always find Him at home in His quiet abode in the

[24] 'Christianus est compendium Evangelii,' Tert. *Apol.*
[25] Book i. chap. xix. [26] Gal. iii. 1.

Tabernacle, glad to be visited and ready to bless His visitors! We use the word 'watching,' in accordance with the general usage of the Church, for the interval which we take upon ourselves to fill up when, in the Devotion of public Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, we succeed one another in the happy work of Adoration. But it is not then only that we can come into the Church to watch Him. He is accessible to us at any hour; and, in answer to our thoughts and prayers before Him, He communicates lessons and graces, strengthens us in virtue, draws us more closely to Himself by love, and helps us in our progress towards Heaven. Thus is it that we, who glory in being friends to our dearest Lord, can do what His enemies used to do: watch Him.

II. There is another way in which our Divine Lord is even now watched by His enemies, and ought with equal vigilance to be watched by his friends. The Church is the continuation of the life of our Blessed Saviour; for He founded it, and remains in it for ever. And as Jesus was set up as a sign to be contradicted, so does the Church inherit the same opposition at the hands of the world. The Church is also a sign: it is known and seen, and its existence can never be ignored. Nothing is better known than the Catholic Church, as an existing reality; but nothing less known than it is by its enemies, in its true principles and office. It was just the same with our Blessed Lord. Men saw Him, and conversed with Him, and were struck with wonder at the signs which accompanied Him. But they attributed His miracles to the working of the evil spirit, and crucified Him in spite of these manifestations of His Divinity. So the Church is misrepresented, misunderstood, opposed, wondered at, and persecuted by the world. But it is not unknown. *We are made a spectacle to the world, and to Angels, and to men,*[27] was St. Paul's declaration, and it is always the motto of the Church.

The Church also, as a visible institution, has her Marks by which she is known, as a tree by its fruits, and is known to be something alone in the midst of the world. She is One, in a world so divided against itself; she is Holy, in a world so opposed to the sanctity of the Gospel; she is Catholic, in a world so selfish and narrow-minded; and she is Apostolical, in a world ever changing and unsteady. By these Marks she is distinguished, and can be known.

What the enemies of the Church do is this. They watch her: they are astonished at her, and are for ever trying to find fault with her. Every human imperfection (for the Church has her human as well as her Divine character) is exaggerated, and

[27] 1 Cor. iv. 9.

brought as an argument against her Divine claims. Every virtue is distorted, because the world ignores the supernatural. If when the world assails her, the Church is silent, she is accused of secret and disloyal conduct. If she speak out and protest, as she has a right to do, she is charged with being arrogant, and refusing obedience to temporal authority. And so the Church is no more known, though watched so closely, than was our dear Lord known by those who persecuted Him, and brought so many false accusations against Him. See Him at the time of His trial standing so meekly before His judges. He is fulfilling the prophecy which told how silently He was to suffer, led to the slaughter as a lamb, not opening His mouth. When many accusations were brought against Him, and Pilate asked Him what reply He could give to them, *He answered him never a word, so that the governor wondered exceedingly*.[28] And when before the high-priest He condescended to give an answer, and appealed to the consciences of those who had heard Him preach openly in the temple, *one of the servants standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying: Answerest thou the high-priest so?*[29] If He was silent, they were astonished; and when He spoke, they struck Him. Such was the case with the Founder of the Church, and no wonder that it is the case with the Church herself. But it is written for the comfort and encouragement of the Church: *Blessed are ye, when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly for My sake: be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you*.[30]

We, too, have our work to do because of this watching the Church by those who are outside of her. We have to bear testimony in her favour, by act and, when necessary, by word also. We have to bear the testimony of good example, in order that we may not bring discredit upon our own Mother, whose children ought to practise what she inculcates. Our Divine Lord so instructed His disciples: *So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven*.[31] He never taught us to act merely that we might please men and gain their esteem; for this conduct of the Pharisees is what He censured and condemned so strongly. But as men are very much influenced to good or evil by those amongst whom they live, He wished His disciples to spread the good odour of holy lives, in order to draw others to admire and imitate. The defence of the Church against her critics, is the

[28] Matt. xxvii. 14.
[29] John xviii. 22.
[30] Matt. v. 11, 12.
[31] Ibid. v. 16.

express motive assigned by St. Paul when he inculcates the necessity of setting good example; for he says to Titus: *In all things show thyself an example of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity: the sound word that can be blamed, that he who is on the contrary part may be afraid, having no evil to say of us.*[32] You know how our Blessed Lord condemned the sin of scandal; and such is the sin of those who, professing to be members of the Church, lead others to think ill of her through the wickedness of their lives.

And there are times also when we ought to be ready to defend the Church by word against those who watch her in order to condemn her. So much is said against the Church nowadays, that her children ought to be ready to assert her rights, and not allow themselves too easily to assent to the unholy principles which are preached aloud against one whom we love to call our Mother. Catholics are sometimes too apt to be affected by the atmosphere of false liberalism, in the midst of which they are almost constrained to live; and such ones think it a sign of a broad and generous mind to compromise sacred principles, and to hesitate giving a loyal adhesion to what the Church, in her struggle with the world, demands of all her followers. They think that Religion is less binding than honour; inasmuch as they are willing to make concessions in the one case which the laws of society would forbid in the other. This is a weak yielding to Human Respect; a giving up what is right, because we are watched. There are many more who imitate the good Nicodemus in going to our Lord by night, for fear of watchers, than who do what, when confirmed in the faith, he did afterwards so nobly in the face of our Lord's enemies—protest openly against judging Him, before they heard and knew what could be alleged against Him.[33]

To those too who are outside the Church, we do not fear to say that they have a duty also which results from their knowing her existence. This they cannot help knowing; for perpetual visibility is a mark of the Church; and she is like the house set upon a high mountain, of which the prophet speaks, to which all nations flow.[34] Let them do more than know her: let them acknowledge her claims upon their submission, or at least investigate them with a truth-loving spirit. Then their watching will be of service to them; they will not then be as sheep going astray, but will be gathered into the fold which they see open to receive them. How awful will it not be on the great Day of doom, for the high-priests and Pilate to see, coming in great power and majesty to judge them, the same One whom they judged so

[32] Tit. ii. 7, 8. [33] John vii. 51. [34] Is. ii. 2.

unjustly and condemned so cruelly! How awful will it not be also for others, on that same Day, to see the claims of the Church recognised by all the world, though they had refused their submission, in spite of the evidence with which those claims had been supported! But as Jesus will then be the rewarder of those who were faithful in their duty of watching Him during life, so will the Church then do her last good work, by transferring into her triumphant kingdom those who had shared her sorrows, had acknowledged her privileges, and had followed her guidance.

SERMON LIX.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE LAW OF LOVE.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment.

How good and how loving is the great God whom we serve! And how many proofs has He not given to us of His goodness and love? But there is one especial proof which He gives, in the connexion which He is ever anxious should subsist between His creatures and Himself, and in the laws by which He governs us. We are to be connected with Him by a tie of Love, and are governed by a law of Love. We may conceive that it could have been otherwise; and that fear, or respect, or obedience, or adoration, would have been the prominent feature in the connexion between the creature and the Creator. And, therefore, it has been the case, that when those to whom Revelation was unknown, devised gods for themselves—creatures, in reality, of man's creation—it never occurred to them to invent the law of Love. Truly *there is no other nation so great which hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present*[1] with us. For Love draws us close to God, as it is the nature of Love to unite its objects one with the other. It is God alone—our God, our own God, as He calls Himself, and wishes us to call Him—who has laid down this law: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind;* and who adds to it the expression of the value which He sets upon this law, when He says: *This is the greatest and the first commandment.*

Who will rebel against this law? Who is there that will not gladly accept and try to fulfil it? It is a law made for us, and addressed immediately to us, and to each one amongst us. *Thou* shalt love. It concerns us, then, most particularly to understand and to obey it. It is not a permission and an invitation; it is not a counsel and a privilege merely, which it will be better for us to follow than to disregard; it is a command, and the most

[1] Deut. iv. 7.

important and imperative, the greatest and first of all laws. Let us try, then, to understand it, in order that we may fulfil it; and let us endeavour to take in its full meaning, and to appreciate what is meant by loving our good God, with our whole *heart* and *soul* and *mind*.

I. What do we mean by loving God with our *whole heart?* For this is Almighty God's first demand; it is the first character He will have, in the love which we are to bear towards Him. Our good and loving God has always shown Himself to be consistent in demanding the tribute of our heart. The heart is really the seat of love. As we see with the eye, and hear with the ear, so do we love with the heart. It is for this reason that through the wise man He says: *My son, give Me thy heart.*[2] Upon earth men are His dearest objects; they rank first there amongst His creatures; they are the only ones who can make Him any active return for all the blessings which He has spread so abundantly around; but this return He looks for, not from the outward acts of man, but from the offering of his heart. For it is not an outward servile obedience which will please Him: He loves a cheerful giver, a hearty servant. It is not the tribute either in prayer of our words and external demeanour that He demands, because He has expressed His displeasure of such service, when He said of those who practised it: *This people honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me.*[3]

The love which we must give to God must be unitive: it must draw us towards Him; for such is the nature of love: it draws hearts together, and suffers under separation from its object. We all know what is our own feeling when we love an object. We see in it that which we feel to be good and beautiful; and whilst we thus feel, we can no more help loving, than we can help seeing objects that are before our eyes in the noonday light. We can withdraw ourselves and our affection by an effort, as we can cease seeing an object by turning away or by closing our eyes; and in certain cases, which would be dangerous to virtue, we are bound to make this effort. But whilst we feel that what we see is good, we are moved towards it by love. St. Thomas of Aquin[4] says that love is a natural inclination of the heart towards what is felt to be good. Therefore, in order to love God, we must fill our souls with the conviction of His goodness, and then it is that our heart will be drawn towards Him. And when, farther than this, we convince ourselves that He is the sovereign good, and is infinite in every perfection that deserves love, we shall be drawn to love Him with our whole heart.

[2] Prov. xxiii. 26. [3] Matt. xv. 8. [4] 1. q. 60, a. 1.

Such, certainly, has been God's love for us, and such has always been His desire with regard to our love for Him. Even before the accomplishment of the Mystery of the Incarnation, and before God had taken to Himself, with our nature, a human heart, He pleaded for the love of His children, and especially for their hearts. *What is man, that Thou shouldst magnify him, or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him?* is the exclamation of holy Job,[5] describing the character of God's love for man. *For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away; Thou art the God of my heart and my portion for ever!* is the exclamation of the Psalmist,[6] describing the character of the love of a soul for God. And we have already seen how, through the wise man, He asks for this same tribute: *My son, give Me thy heart.* And the law, as it is quoted in the Gospel of to-day, was the same that was given when God declared His will to the Israelites through Moses.[7]

But especially is it in the Mystery of the Incarnation that we find the duty of loving with our whole heart urged upon us. Our Blessed Lord, in becoming man, comes to love and be loved. If it might have been hard to fix the heart upon God, when He could be conceived only as dwelling in the midst of the majesty of Heaven, all the difficulty is surely removed when we consider Him in the humble and attractive form under which He is now constantly presented before us. An infant, a child, a benefactor, a friend, a teacher, a sufferer, and a martyr:—such are the aspects under which we ever view Him; and under such aspects, is it difficult to love Him? If He now asks us to give Him our heart, is it hard for us to offer Him that tribute?

And what is He not even now contriving to do in order to earn the offering which He demands? Look at the Blessed Sacrament: look at His Sacred Heart: look at the Crucifix; and you have before you powerful motives and impulses to love Him, and to give Him your heart. He promised His Apostles that He would remain with them for ever, even to the end of the world; and He does remain, because He loves us. Love does not allow of separation, and for that reason He leaves us not. Love, sincere and genuine, is not short-lived; it *falleth not away*, as St. Paul says of it. What more constant than His love in the Adorable Sacrament, in which He is always abiding in the midst of His people! What more unitive than the act He performs each time that through love He comes and takes up His abode within us in Holy Communion! His Sacred Heart is there, indeed, doing Its work, and enabling each one of us to share for

[5] Job vii. 17. [6] Ps. lxxii. 26. [7] Deut. vi. 5.

the time the privilege of the beloved disciple who reposed upon It at the last supper. And the Crucifix, always so much valued by the Church as a powerful instrument in drawing souls to love and to contrition, is not that sufficient to remove any difficulty in loving so good a God, who is always reminding us through its means of what He did in order to deserve our love? If He prophesied that when lifted up from the earth He would draw all things to Himself, surely our hearts ought not to be excepted.

II. Our first duty is to love with our whole heart, our next is to love God with our *whole soul.* What does this mean, as an addition to the love of the heart? The soul is the principle of life and activity; and when we love with our whole soul, we give up ourselves so thoroughly to the object of our love, that we live and act for that alone. Such was the love of David and Jonathan, of which the Scripture tells us: *The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. . . . And Jonathan stripped himself of the coat with which he was clothed, and gave it to David, and the rest of his garments, even to his sword, and his bow, and to his girdle.*[8] This is the character of true love: *it seeketh not its own;* it is ready to make sacrifices, and rejoices in having an opportunity of making them.

What was the nature of the love of our dear Lord for us? Was it merely a sentimental love? *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*[9] That is the test of love, given by Him, and we know how true He was in satisfying it. He gave up everything for our sake. He might have been rich, and great, and powerful; but for us He became poor, humble, and suffering; for He loved us with His soul, and proved His love by the sacrifice of His life. Such was the love also which He wished to infuse into His disciples, and which was manifested by His first followers. They gave up all things to follow Him, in order that there might be no object which could serve as a counter-attraction to that love which they offered exclusively to Him. Each of them might have said with St. Paul: *The love of Christ presseth us,*[10] for it was the one motive which impelled them in all their sacrifices, labours, and sufferings. They loved with their whole soul, and therefore they threw themselves so earnestly and thoroughly into their great work.

The value which Almighty God sets upon the soul of man, and which we ought therefore to set upon our own, is expressed by our Divine Lord in that saying which is so familiar to all of us: *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and*

[8] 1 Kings xviii. 1-4. [9] John xv. 13. [10] 2 Cor. v. 14.

suffer the loss of his own soul? and our Lord adds the words: *Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?*[11] One proof, then, that you will be giving to God that you love Him with your whole soul, will be in labouring to save that soul; for in saving it you save it for Him. It is His soul: created by Him, and for Himself: made like to Himself, and, being spiritual, belonging to the highest order of created things. It belongs to Him further, because He has purchased it at so great a Price, and is always watching over it with such anxious love. Are you anxious to save it? Your answer is not to be in words, but in acts, and these must be acts of love. *If you love Me, keep My Commandments*, is what our dear Lord says to us;[12] and it is by keeping the Commandments, and therefore by loving Him, that we are to secure our salvation.

You, who are willing to accept this law of Love, and faithfully to obey it, answer what I would ask you, and see whether you satisfy the test of obedience. If you are heedless about the duty of prayer, which is imposed upon you as a command, and is itself an exercise of love and of union, can you pretend that you love God with your whole soul? No, you do not love Him. If you neglect the Sacraments, those signs of such wonderful love on the part of God who instituted them, and proofs of love on the part of those who frequent them devoutly, can you be said to love God with your whole soul? No, you do not love Him. If you have but feeble sympathy with the Church in her sufferings, and are slow in your allegiance to her, or over-timid in defending her interests against assailants who are nowadays so numerous, can you pretend to love Him who founded her, and who is abiding in her all days even to the end of the world? No, you cannot pretend to love your Lord, unless you love this work of His hands. If, again, and this is a direct and most practical test, if you love not your neighbour: if you forgive not those who have offended you: if you show no mercy to the poor and the afflicted, can you dare to assert that you are loving that God who has Himself imposed this law upon you, and has made love for your neighbour to be in some measure on a level with love for Himself? For it is our Lord who says that the commandment which enforces this duty is like to the first, which orders the duty of love to God. And we have the strong assurances of the disciple of love, who so closely identifies one of these duties with the other, when he says: *If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. . . . And this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother.*[13] Thus, a love which does

[11] Matt. xvi. 26. [12] John xiv. 15. [13] 1 John iv. 20, 21.

not manifest itself in works, is not the love which is enjoined, when we are ordered to love God with our whole soul. *He who loveth not remaineth in death*,[14] says St. John; and where there is no soul there is no life, and such a man's love is but dead, and merits not the name of Love.

III. It is not enough to love with our whole heart and soul; for the Commandment adds that we must love with our *whole mind* also. It is this which makes our love solid and appreciative. It must be the love of an intelligent being, and grounded upon motives by which such a being is influenced. There is a character which St. Paul tells us ought to be found in our service of God: it ought to be *reasonable*.[15] So ought our love for God to be reasonable also. Not that we are likely to fail by being led to love God by any unworthy motive, but we ought to exalt our motives, and thus make our love more pure and more exalted also. It is for this reason that we ought oftentimes to make Almighty God the object of our thoughts: that we ought to dwell in meditation on His infinite Perfections, and seek for higher and additional reasons for giving to Him the tribute of our love. The first duty which we owe to God is to know Him. We must know Him, before we can love Him; as love is not bestowed upon that which we know not. Knowledge is an act of the mind, and the more we try to know God and to be familiar with His Perfections, the more nearly shall we be approaching to the fulfilment of the duty of loving Him with our whole mind. Well may we accustom ourselves to exclaim with St. Augustine, 'O Lord! may I know Thee, and may I know myself!'

When our good God is urging us to love Him, He argues with us, and thus tries to influence our mind. He points to all that He has done for us, and shows how reasonable it is, that we should in return give Him the love that He demands of us. He reminds us that He has created us, and that therefore it is becoming for the creature to love his Creator: *Is He not thy Father, that hath possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee?*[16] And not only has He created you, but for your sake and through love for you, has He made all things on that earth which *He hath given to the children of men*.[17] More than this, He designs for us a share in the kingdom of His Glory, for it is really for Heaven that He has created us. Then, He extends over us the loving protection of His Providence, guarding us as the apple of His eye, and sheltering us under the shadow of His wings; so that no father ever could love a child as He loves us. For us also did

[14] 1 John iii. 14.
[15] Rom. xii. 1.
[16] Deut. xxxii. 6.
[17] Ps. cxiii.

He design the wonderful Mystery of the Incarnation, as the Creed reminds us: *Who for us men, and for our salvation, descended from Heaven, and was made man.* To us too does He continue to extend the blessings of this Mystery, through the ministry of the Church and the wonderful Sacraments: through Prayer and the protection of the Saints and Angels; and especially through all the riches He gives to us through the constant abiding amongst us of Himself in the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar. To these does God appeal, when He presses us to acknowledge His claims upon our love, and therefore to love Him upon a reasonable motive, and with our whole mind.

Even from sinners is this tribute of love demanded. Nay, pardon is promised in proportion to love, as He who so much loved sinners declared of one of His conquests: *Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.*[18] To the mind of sinners, as well as to their heart and soul, does our good God appeal when He argues with them upon the importance of returning to Him, of not running after other objects, but of belonging wholly and exclusively to Himself. *Come and accuse Me,*[19] He says, in the powerful words of Isaias, as if He were holding Himself out to the rebuke of sinners, if He should refuse their offer of love. Would He have done all that He has done for sinners, if He were indifferent to their love? For them especially did He come, according to that *saying, faithful and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into this world in order to save sinners.*[20] Did our dear Lord ever refuse any one who came to Him, moved by love? Was He hard upon Mary Magdalene, or upon Peter, or upon the poor sinful woman brought to Him into the Temple, or upon the dying thief upon the cross? Do the parables of the prodigal son, and the lost sheep, and the good Samaritan show signs of a hard heart in Him who spoke them? When He called out to all to come to Him who were heavy-burdened, it was especially of the burden of sin He spoke, which He promised to remove from those who would come for relief. Therefore, sinners, so far from being deterred, are to consider themselves prominent amongst those invited to obey the law of loving with their whole heart, and soul, and mind.

God, then, demands from every one of us without exception the love of our heart, and soul, and mind; but it is not to be a divided love; we must give Him the whole of each. And therefore our love for Him must be sovereign and constant. There is not to be an object, not a single one, that we must allow to stand in the way of this love. There is not to be a moment in which

[18] Luke vii. 47. [19] Is. i. 18. [20] 1 Tim. i. 15.

we can consider ourselves exempt from its obligation. At every period of time, under every circumstance of life, we must love our God. In the days of youth we must run to Him as did the Psalmist who calls God the joy of his youth.[21] In the full vigour and activity of life, at the time in which there is most likely to be a struggle for our heart and our allegiance between God and the world, we must remember that we cannot serve two masters, but that the one we ought to serve is He, who is the God of our heart and our portion for ever. In old age, in sickness, and in sorrow He still claims our love. He is as young as ever, and in proportion as He detaches us from the world, He draws us more closely to Himself, and is preparing us for a more perfect possession of Himself in that kingdom where He makes all things new.

You may have seen that picture which modern art has made so familiar, describing a scene recorded for us in the book of the Confessions of St. Augustine.[22] The Saint with his good mother, St. Monica, had just started from Rome for Africa, and had arrived at the port of Ostia, whence they were to embark. They are represented seated, hand in hand, looking up towards Heaven, whilst they are conversing upon the love and goodness of God. It was there that she was to die, for she could proceed no farther. But it mattered not to her where she died. Nothing is far off from God, she said; and the way to Heaven was as close from one spot as from another. In good and faithful souls the love of God and Heaven are always associated together. Heaven is the home of Love, and it is the eternal abode of those who upon earth have kept the Law of Love.

[21] Ps. xlii. [22] Aug. Conf. lib. ix. cap. ix.

SERMON LX.

ROSARY SUNDAY.

Hail, Full of Grace, our Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou amongst women. Luke i. 28.

THESE words, by which the Archangel Gabriel introduced the message which was entrusted to him, when he was sent from Heaven by Almighty God, to announce to the ever-blessed Virgin Mary the dignity for which she had been selected, of the Divine Maternity, seem to-day to be sounding in every one's ears, to be hanging on every lip, and express the thought with which every Catholic heart is filled. For it is the Feast of the most holy Rosary, a Festival kept universally throughout the Church in commemoration of one of her great victories in a time of great danger, and in thanksgiving for a defence, which the ever-blessed Mother of God, as the Help of Christians, is ever affording to the Church in general, and to each Christian that invokes her. In thousands upon thousands of churches throughout the world the faithful are this day assembling in order to join in this devotional practice; and the words, *Hail, Full of Grace*, which first came down from Heaven to earth, for they had their origin in Heaven, have in a continuous chorus been mounting up throughout the day from earth to Heaven. This holy devotion, therefore, thus adopted and practised constantly, though exceptionally and especially to-day, serves like other external observances to manifest the uniformity and universality of the Catholic Church, and proves how all her children, scattered though they are amongst all the nations of the globe, are bound together by one spirit, and pray with one heart and one soul.

It is a theological principle upon which the Church ever acts, that the law of faith and of prayer is the same, and that communion or fellowship in prayer is expressive of unity in faith. The beautiful practice of the Rosary, in honour of which the Church consecrates this Sunday, the first in October, stands certainly forward as an evidence of this double fellowship. The form of prayer which is herein adopted, is an evidence and an

outward expression of what the Church believes, regarding the position due to the Holy Mother of God, and attests to the advantage of invoking her intercession. I can well understand with what confidence and joy all of you, who have loved to practise this devotion will join in it to-day. For you feel that you are not praying alone, nor that it is your own feeble voice which is trying to make itself reach up to Heaven. The Church diffused throughout the whole world is praying with you in precisely the same form; and as you are one with her in faith, hope, and love, you must be filled with confidence, that a day which tells of former victories through the means of this prayer, will bring special blessings upon you, and that the protection hitherto afforded in days of trial to the Church and her Head upon earth, will be secured and continued in answer to so many petitions sent before the throne of Grace, through the means of the Holy Rosary.

I. Let us try to understand properly what is the Rosary, so that we may make our devotion the more solid and practical. The Rosary is a form of prayer consisting of the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Doxology or Glory be to the Father, &c. Fifteen Mysteries, in connexion with the great central Mystery of the Incarnation, are selected as an object of meditation; whilst in honour of each, the Our Father is said once, followed by the Hail Mary said ten times, and ending with the Doxology said once. Thus the whole Rosary consists of the Our Father said fifteen times, the Hail Mary said one hundred and fifty times, and the Doxology fifteen times. It is usual to divide the fifteen Mysteries into three sets of five each: the first set comprising the Mysteries which preceded the Passion: the second set those which formed the Passion; and the third set those which came after the Passion. The first five are called the Joyful Mysteries: the second, the Sorrowful Mysteries: the third, the Glorious Mysteries. This division is clearly marked out for practice in the ordinary Rosary beads, which, when said once through, will have served to commemorate any of the sets of five Mysteries which we have mentioned.

The fact of the Church thus selecting these various Mysteries, and encouraging us to meditate upon each one separately, whilst we recite the Rosary, shows how deeply she values the great Mystery of the Incarnation, and how she attends to and does not lose sight of any of its details. We know, my dear brethren, that we owe everything to this Mystery, by which we have been redeemed, have regained our claim to Heaven, and have been restored to the friendship of God. And in order to make us value it the more, and never forget what are its claims upon our

gratitude, each event connected with it is not simply alluded to in the Rosary, but is dwelt upon for some time in a spirit of prayer, in order that it may produce an impression upon us, make us recollected, and bring the blessing which fervent and attentive prayer never fails in securing. We are always taught by the Church to pray for every grace and blessing through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and this certainly is a thought that is very prominent in the Rosary.

If we just glance at the Mysteries one by one, we shall see how Scriptural they are, and how they help us to view the Incarnation in God's own light, recognising in it the high and prominent position which He marked out for the Mother of the Word made Flesh. Taking first of all the first set, namely the five Joyful Mysteries, we commemorate five events detailed for us in the opening chapters of the holy Gospel of St. Luke. We begin by contemplating the Mystery of the Annunciation, in which we picture to ourselves the Archangel Gabriel coming down from Heaven, having been sent by God to the holy Virgin of Nazareth, to address her as full of grace, and to make known to her that the long-expected time has now arrived, and that she is to be the Mother of the Redeemer of the world; and that through the operation of the Holy Ghost the wonderful Mystery is to be accomplished. Whilst our thoughts are thus engaged, we say the Our Father, the ten Hail Mary's, and the Doxology. Then we pursue the Gospel account and go in spirit with the Virgin-Mother, already bearing within her the Incarnate Word, and visit her cousin St. Elizabeth, and listen to the address which, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, the saint makes to the Mother of her Lord. Then we pass on to the outward fulfilment of the Mystery, enter the Stable of Bethlehem, and see what the Shepherds saw, *the Child with Mary His Mother*. We pass on afterwards to the Temple of Jerusalem, and assist with the aged Simeon and the devout widow Anna, at the Presentation of the Child Jesus. We afterwards accompany Mary and Joseph in their anxious search after the Child, when, at the age of twelve, He was lost by them on their return to Nazareth from Jerusalem, and we share in the joy with which they were filled on finding Him safe, and busy about His Father's work in the Temple in the midst of the Doctors. Thus we have gone over the early events of the coming and the life of our Lord; and we consider in them especially the joy which each of them brought into the world, and imparted to those most immediately concerned in them.

The Rosary then leads us on, in the second set of Mysteries, to contemplate some of the chief details of the bitter Passion. We

commence, as our dear Lord commenced, by the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemani, and we try to join in the fervour with which He prayed at that onset of His sufferings. Secondly, we follow Him, after He had been seized by His enemies, and meditate upon the cruel punishment to which Pilate condemned Him—the Scourging at the Pillar. We next think of another cruel act exercised towards Him, in the Crowning of Thorns. We proceed, then, to His condemnation, and assist at His Carrying the Cross. Lastly, we witness His Crucifixion, and place ourselves by the side of the Cross, where stood His Mother and the Disciple whom Jesus loved. And in this manner we have gone over the chief events in the history of the Passion, and have attended to the five Sorrowful Mysteries.

The last set is formed of the Glorious Mysteries, and in these we contemplate first the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord, and associate with this event the glory bestowed upon His Blessed Mother, who must have illustrated St. Paul's principle: *As you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you also be of the consolation.*[1] Next, we accompany our Blessed Lord to Mount Olivet, and stand looking up to Heaven, witnessing the glory of His Admirable Ascension. Afterwards we place ourselves in imagination in the upper room with the disciples, *and Mary the Mother of Jesus,*[2] and witness the Coming down of the Holy Ghost. After this, in the two remaining Mysteries we contemplate the Assumption, and last of all the Coronation in Heaven of the ever-blessed Mother of God. Although these two last events are not recorded in Scripture, they follow from Scripture principles, that exceptional glory is given to exceptional merits, and that one who had been most intimately connected with the Mystery of the Incarnation, would partake most abundantly of the rewards purchased through that Mystery. The Church has shown her sanction of the tradition which records the Assumption and the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin, by the Festival which she celebrates in August, and by assigning to her all the queenly titles which we love to give to her in the Litany of Loreto. Thus as the Rosary began by contemplating an Angel coming down from Heaven, it ends by placing before us the glory of the Queen of Angels entering into Heaven, and crowned by Her Son and the Eternal Father.

The Devotion of the Rosary, as it is now practised, was instituted by St. Dominic, very early in the thirteenth century, and has therefore been established for between six and seven hundred years. It is thus shown to have a blessing upon it, and in some way answers the test of the good Gamaliel in the Acts of

[1] 2 Cor. i. 7. [2] Acts i. 14.

the Apostles, inasmuch as its permanence proves it to be of higher origin than merely the counsel and work of man. Man was the instrument of its institution, but God was its promoter. It was at once taken up instinctively, and spread rapidly through various countries; and time has proved that the enthusiasm was not short-lived. St. Dominic's intention in propagating the devotion was to supply a defence and a protest against heresies which prevailed at the time, and which especially assailed the Mystery of the Incarnation. Greater prominence was given to the Devotion, and an additional public sanction extended to it by the Church, when, in the year 1571, on the first Sunday in October, at the time that prayers and processions in honour of the Rosary were bringing down God's protection upon the Church, the infidel Turks, who were threatening the destruction of Christendom, were defeated utterly in the glorious battle of Lepanto. This was during the Pontificate of St. Pius V. In honour of this victory, and of another in the year 1716 over the Turks, secured by the same means of prayer through the Rosary, the Festival of to-day was established, and became afterwards extended throughout the world. In connexion with these same victories, the title of 'Help of Christians' was given to our Blessed Lady; and a special Festival in honour of that title, and in thanksgiving for further blessings and signs of protection, was instituted for the twenty-fourth day of May by Pope Pius VII., in honour of his triumphant entry on that day into Rome, whence he had been carried violently away, and had been detained in captivity for the space of five years. This happy event, another, and it cannot be the last, of the victories of the Church, occurred in the year 1814. In that very same month, the first Napoleon, who had thus invaded the sacred rights of the Vicar of Christ, was led away captive into the island of Elba, after having signed his abdication of the imperial crown. Does not this Feast of the Most Holy Rosary inspire us all with confidence that victories are yet in store, and that in the time of the trials of the Church, there is still a Help of Christians, to be invoked and to be depended upon?

II. Let us now, as a further incentive towards practising the Devotion of the Rosary, consider the advantages which attend it.

And, first, it is to be remembered that the Rosary is a prayer, and on that account it deserves to be attended to, inasmuch as prayer is always accompanied by blessings. We know how this duty of prayer is repeatedly inculcated by our Divine Lord, and that He has promised such abundant rewards to those who practise it. We know, too, how the Church by word and example is always urging us to the fulfilment of this obligation; for she is constantly

exhorting us to pray, and in her Festivals and beautiful Liturgy she is leading a life of Prayer. Yet we are so apt to neglect this duty, and find it oftentimes to be so burdensome. And so we must be treated as little children are, and have something given to us, as if it were to amuse and to coax us into our task. The Rosary answers this purpose. This we see from the fact of its being a favourite devotion of the poor, who cannot perhaps read, and therefore want the aid which reading affords to others. And whilst the Rosary is thus alluring us to pray, it is no ordinary prayer we are offering up through its means. The frequent repetition of the 'best of all prayers,' as the Catechism properly calls the Lord's Prayer, and of the Hail Mary, an inspired address to our Blessed Lady, and of the tribute of praise in the Doxology, must be acceptable in Heaven and of great profit to ourselves.

The Rosary is not a prayer only, but it is a meditation also, and this adds greatly to the spiritual blessings it brings to us. It is essential, in order to gain the full benefit of the holy practice, that we should, whilst we recite the prayers which form it, place before our mind one or other of the several Mysteries. And thus we are encouraged to the exercise of mental as well as vocal prayer. You know what great store spiritual writers set by the practice of mental prayer, and how they associate it with progress in perfection. Those who attend to it become more closely united to God, and more detached from creatures; and even in their ordinary vocal prayers they gain greater blessings because of their attentive habits, than can be expected by those whose prayers are full of distractions, and who at such a time 'think not of God nor of what they say.'

Again: the Holy Rosary, as we have seen already, brings before us the great Mystery of the Incarnation, the source to us of every grace and blessing. Whilst we are reciting it, we are begging the Eternal Father to be looking down upon His Christ, His Anointed One, and through His merits to grant our petition. Our Blessed Lord has made the promise, that whatever we ask in His Name shall be granted to us. When through His Joys, His Sorrows, or His Glories, we are pressing our suit before the throne of God, it is through the Name of JESUS we are praying, and therefore we have the greatest confidence that we shall *obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid*.[3] The Rosary is really a little epitome of the Gospel. It is like a reading book to the poor, in which they can study the Life of Christ, and gather instruction from each one of its valued details. We have

[3] Heb. iv. 16.

said that the defence of the Incarnation against its assailants, was a great motive in impelling St. Dominic to propagate this holy practice, and the Saint found that he was not disappointed in the results which attended his labours in that noble cause.

By the fact also of the Rosary being an indulgenced prayer, it deserves additional recommendation. It is not necessary to enumerate now what these indulgences are, but it is sufficient for you to remember that they are very numerous, and that they thus prove the Church's sanction and strong encouragement in behalf of this Devotion. Have the intention, when you recite this prayer, to gain all the indulgences you can, and you will be enriched in return. The charity which we ought to bear towards our own soul, and the desire that after death our separation from Heaven may be as brief as possible, ought always to stimulate us to set a due value upon Indulgences, the use of which, as our profession of faith declares, 'is most profitable to Christian people.' Here again we see the great practical benefit of the Rosary.

Moreover, this Devotion is most truly Catholic in its literal sense. It is universal in place, and it has grown venerable by the time of its existence. For nearly seven hundred years it has been an incentive to prayer, and who can number the times that it has done its work, and has presented suppliants before the God of Mercy! In every nation under the sun, from its rising to its going down, hand-in-hand with belief in the Incarnation has been preached the devotion of the Rosary. Like the sign of the Cross, it is one of the outward expressions of our faith, and it is accepted in Heaven as a declaration of our hope and our love. In the Rosary we pray not alone: at the moment we are saying it, we may be convinced that there are thousands elsewhere uniting with us in heart and in word; and this thought cannot fail to increase our confidence and fervour. To-day especially, as the Festival is now of universal precept, many millions are combined together, and what the countless host in Heaven are doing before the Throne of God, singing with one voice, as the Preface of the Mass tells us, this is what is done throughout the world, when in unity of heart and word the same prayer is streaming on from earth to Heaven.

Lastly, what ought to make this Devotion more acceptable to us is its simplicity. It is the prayer of the poor and of children. Every one can learn it. Among the simpler members of religious orders it is oftentimes substituted in place of the Divine Office, and thus the Church apportions to it a share in the work of the Liturgy. Those, too, who cannot read, can find in this Devotion

a supply for that want, and therefore the poor instinctively love the beads, and prove by their patronage of this prayer, that it has an especial blessing upon it. Oftentimes in the beautiful Psalms, when King David is begging for mercy, he calls himself a poor man, and in that spirit he presses his demands. *The Lord has become the refuge of the poor,*[4] he says in one place. Elsewhere he says: *The Lord is in His holy temple: the Lord's throne is in Heaven; His eyes look down upon the poor man.*[5] *Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and hear me; for I am needy and poor,*[6] is the way in which he opens another of his songs. The wise man assures us, *the prayer out of the mouth of the poor shall reach the ears of God.*[7] It was most frequently in answer to the cry of the poor that our Divine Lord wrought His miracles and accorded His favours. He became their companion, and from amongst them He chose His first followers and Apostles. Humble yourself to pray as the poor do, and you will be offering to Heaven a violence which it will not resist: *The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds: and till it come nigh, he will not be comforted, and he will not depart till the Most High behold.*[8]

Listen, then, to-day to the voice and argument of the Church, as she places before you the Devotion of the Most Holy Rosary for your acceptance and practice. Love it at all times, and be assured that it will be the means of bringing innumerable blessings upon you. If it should occur to you to object to it, because of its frequent repetition of the same prayer, remember that this is an additional reason for your loving it the more, inasmuch as it resembles the act of our dear Lord in His agony in the Garden of Gethsemani. There it was that our Lord said His Rosary; for the Evangelist bears testimony to His repeating over and over again the same prayer: *Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.* He interrupts His prayer for a time to come and exhort His three Apostles to join with Him in prayer, and returns; and then again comes back to them after an interval; and then, after another exhortation, returns, *and the third time He prayed, saying the self-same word.*[9] We may depend upon it, that Almighty God is never tired of hearing the repetition of His own Son's prayer, and of the address which He Himself commissioned the archangel to make to the holy Mother of His Son. Many Saints are named as having especially loved the Rosary, with all its happy and holy repetitions. This we are told in the instances of

[4] Ps. ix. [5] Ibid. x. [6] Ibid. lxxxv.
[7] Ecclus. xxi. 6. [8] Ibid. xxxv. 21. [9] Matt. xxvi. 44.

such practical and active Saints as St. Francis of Sales, St. Charles Borromeo, and St. Vincent de Paul. There is much repetition in the songs of Heaven, where Holy, holy, holy, forms their constant burden; and thus the holy Rosary has a resemblance to the worship offered to God in that glorious home of Saints and Angels. Thus this holy Devotion may serve to be preparing us for our future work in eternity. It will have taught us how to pray, and prayer will have taught us the way to Heaven.

SERMON LXI.

MATERNITY AND PURITY OF B.V.M.

Hail, Full of Grace, our Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou amongst women. Luke i. 28.

The Church, in all her dealings, shows that she is under the guidance of the Spirit of Wisdom. Not in her teaching only, and her watchfulness over morals and discipline, does she manifest the influence which presides over her, but in her devotional system also. And therefore, in the arrangement of her Festivals, it is not accident nor mere sentiment which accounts for their disposal; but she sees a harmony and a fitness, and finds an occasion for conveying instruction to her children, which leads her to direct all things towards the realising of the high and holy end for which she has been instituted. This is illustrated in two Festivals which the Church appoints for the two Sundays which follow next after the solemnity of the Most Holy Rosary. On one of these Sundays we celebrate the Maternity, and on the other the Purity, of the Blessed Mother of God. There is an intimate connexion between the two privileges which these Festivals commemorate, and they both combine in enforcing a very important principle.

It cannot require many words or much effort to show what this principle is. The Feast of the Maternity brings before us the commemoration of the highest privilege of the Blessed Virgin —the highest privilege, indeed, which any creature could have, that of being Mother of God. The Feast of the Purity tells us of the manner in which she was prepared for that high office: it commemorates her absolute sinlessness and her perfection in virtue. And between the two privileges brought before us in these Festivals there is in some manner an interchange of cause and effect, each in its turn accounting for the other. The Maternity may be asserted as being the cause of the Purity, and the Purity as the cause of the Maternity. That is to say, as Almighty God intended Mary to be the Mother of His only-begotten Son, He fitted her for the office, and made her most Pure and sinless. Therefore the Maternity is the reason of her Purity. And again, when amongst all the daughters of Eve Almighty God was to

select one as the best suited for the dignity of being Mother of the Divine Word made Flesh, it was becoming that He should choose the purest and most free from sin; and thus the Purity is alleged as accounting for her being destined to the office of the Maternity. It is something like what we may have witnessed in a large hall brilliantly lighted up for some festive occasion. The walls are all lined with bright mirrors, and numerous lights are suspended in the centre. The light is thrown upon each mirror, and each reflects it back again, multiplying the brilliancy times without number; each receiving beauty from the light, and each returning the beauty by its reflection, and becoming thus both the effect and the cause of the brilliancy which prevails. This is how the Church views the connexion between the Maternity and Purity; and it is thus she wishes us to consider these two high privileges of Mary.

I. In considering the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin, we are to turn our thoughts upon the manner in which it pleased Almighty God to deal with Mary. The Gospel which is read upon one of these Festivals, that of the Purity, is the best record of what was done in her regard. It is the account of the message of the Archangel Gabriel, sent by God to address the holy Virgin of Nazareth in the words of our text: *Hail, Full of Grace, our Lord is with thee!* She is going to become the Mother of the Incarnate Word, and it is her Purity and Fulness of Grace that are proclaimed. The Eternal Father, being now about to accomplish His promise of pardon to the world, through the mission of His Son who was to come, *made of a woman*,[1] first of all fits that chosen Woman for the office which prophecy had assigned to her. She is to share with the Son who is to be born of her, in perpetual and victorious enmities against the serpent, the introducer of sin into the world, and the cause of man's ruin. She is the Virgin that is to conceive and to bring forth a Son, whose name is to be Emmanuel. At the time that the Mystery of the Incarnation was first decreed, the existence of that holy Mother was decreed also, because it was designed that the Son was to be born, and thus to come into the world. Who, therefore, can tell how great ought to be the holiness of her who had thus lived in the decrees of God, had been the subject of prophecy, is to be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, is declared Full of Grace and Blessed amongst women, by one of the seven spirits who are always before the throne of God, and who is now going to bear about for nine months in her holy womb the God of Angels and of men! In a word, who can tell what the Maternity implied in her, who was thus to be honoured!

[1] Gal. iv. 4.

The only-begotten Son of God, the Image and the figure of the substance of the Father, who thought it not robbery to be equal with His Father, adored by Angels, having inherited a more excellent name than they, does not disdain the Virgin's womb. He finds it a worthy habitation; for the fulness of Grace with which she who bore Him had been invested, makes her fit to become the Temple of God. He whom the Father looks upon with complacency as His well-beloved Son, He whom the Angels long to behold, beautiful amongst the children of men, takes the substance of His Body from her, upon whom devolves the honour of the Divine Maternity, and receives from her that Precious Blood, which is to be offered as a sacrifice to His Father, and which will have efficacy enough to atone for the sins of the whole world. He is to be nourished at her breasts; and thus will give cause to the Church to be ever repeating the cry of the devout woman in the crowd: *Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the breasts which gave Thee suck.*[2]

The Gospel which we are considering, and from which we have taken our text, tells us also very precisely what was to be the work of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity in effecting the Mystery of the Incarnation, and therefore in the office of the Maternity. For it records how, when the holy Virgin, to whom the Archangel had delivered his message, was filled with wonder, and asked how it was possible that she could become the Mother of the One who was expected, and for whose coming she herself had so often prayed, she received the answer: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.* Thus the Holy Spirit, the link between the Father and the Son in the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity, the Spirit of Love, the Sanctifier of souls, He whose temple a soul becomes when it is in a state of Grace, the Spirit of Truth and of Fortitude, who dwells in the Church and protects her under all her trials, He coöperates with her in effecting this Mystery. This dealing of Almighty God with the privileged Virgin-Mother, shows us at once how exalted she was, and how far she surpassed others to whom the great God of Heaven has vouchsafed at any time to show exceptional favour. The sacred Scriptures tell us how intimately God dealt with Moses: *And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man is wont to speak to his friend.*[3] Yet when Moses approaches Him, there is an order given to him: *Come not nigh hither, put off the shoes from thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy.*[4] How different was the privilege of Mary in her Maternity, who is not bidden to stand at a dis-

[2] Luke xi. 27. [3] Exod. xxxiii. 11. [4] Ibid. iii. 5.

tance, but over whom One of the Divine Persons spreads Himself, and within whom Another takes up His abode!

Well therefore might it be an Angel, and one of the highest Angels, one of the seven even whose office it is to stand close before God, the bright Archangel Gabriel, who is despatched to convey to her the tidings, that she is chosen for the office of the Divine Maternity. It is not a prophet such as Almighty God sent to Saul or David, or to other kings to whom He wished in a solemn manner to intimate His commands. It had been an angel, but a fallen angel, an angel of darkness, who, on the unhappy day of the fall of our first Parents, seduced our first mother Eve from her obedience, and made her, who was still a virgin, give her consent to an act, which brought sin and death into the world; now it is another Angel, the faithful obedient Gabriel, the messenger always of the Incarnation, who had foretold to Daniel the future date of this event, and to Zachary its close fulfilment, who comes to solicit the consent of another Mother of mankind, to an act which was to reverse the work of disobedience, and to bring life and pardon unto men. Such was the preparation for the Maternity.

And when, after hesitating for a moment, as became the Virgin most Prudent, she gives her consent, and speaks the word which the Divine Messenger was to carry back to Heaven: *Be it done to me according to thy word*, the Mystery is accomplished; and in the same moment in which the Word is made Flesh, Mary becomes the Mother of that Word Incarnate, and the honour of Maternity is associated with the glory of Virginity. There is in her case a counterpart to the union of the two Natures in the One Person of the Son of God. He becomes Man, but remains God: she becomes a Mother, but remains a Virgin. In becoming Man, He took our infirmities, but continued perfect God in the Bosom of His Father: in becoming a Mother, she appears as such in the eyes of men, and is thought of by them as nothing different from others, but Angels know the secret, and we may imagine them to be singing the Antiphon which the Church sings in the Office of Lauds for Christmas: 'The Mother has given birth to the King whose name is Eternal, possessing both the joys of a Mother and the honour of a Virgin: no one ever has been like unto her, nor ever shall be: alleluia.'[5]

Jesus, then, is born of her. She becomes truly His Mother; for from the substance of her body is formed the Body which is fitted for Him. He comes, made of a Woman, and by Son and Mother is crushed the serpent's head. In His Infancy and Hid-

[5] Genuit puerpera Regem. Ant. 2 ad Laudes.

den Life He remains almost exclusively hers; and in His last hours upon Calvary, she is there fulfilling the office of a Mother. What must not thirty-three years' presence have done for her, when a few moments in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, or the happier moments in which the Blessed Sacrament takes up its abode within us in Holy Communion, do so much for us? If the preparation for the Maternity implied such Purity in the Virgin-Mother, how must not the fulfilment have increased and added splendour to the virtues of that Mother?

II. And thus we are led to consider what Mary did for God, and to see how, if the Maternity tells us that God had done great things for her, as she sings in her *Magnificat*, she had also to do great things for Him, in order to prove herself faithful to the duties of her office. She acted as a Mother to God's own Son, and what could she do greater than this? In our intercourse with each other, and in the discharge of the duties which social connexion or mutual charity imply, there are degrees of service and of kindness. To do to another the duty of a faithful servant is a matter of no slight importance; to act as a true and devoted friend is of higher value; to do what an obedient and affectionate child or brother will do, is still more considered in the order of natural affection; but what is this in comparison with what has been done, or can be done, by a Mother alone? Our Divine Lord had many servants and disciples; these He also called His friends and brethren, as at His last supper He said to them, *I will no longer call you servants, . . . but I have called you friends;* but He had, and only could have, one Mother. Upon her it devolved to have all the responsibility which such a relationship implied, and the Flight into Egypt, the searching after Him and finding Him in the Temple, the attendance upon Him at Calvary, show how faithful she was to her exalted and most sacred charge.

She did great things also by her constant coöperation with Grace, and her perseverance in her progress towards Perfection. God sends each of us into the world with one task before us, and so great and important is this task, that all the world beside is of no value in comparison with it. One thing is necessary, and that one thing is to save our soul. What can it profit us if we succeed not in this, although we gain everything else? And what would it have profited Mary, that God should have given her Grace, and have bestowed upon her the dignity of the Maternity, if she had not been faithful in proportion to her high elevation? It profited nothing to the fallen angels, that God had so exalted them when He created them, if, after all, *they kept not*

their principality, as St. Jude says, *but forsook their own habitation*.[6] She, who is well called the Virgin most Faithful, never disappointed her Creator, but carried out fully all that her exalted position demanded of her. If to the servant to whom five talents were given, great praise was accorded, because he gained fruit in proportion, the greatest praise is due to her, to whom the Author of Grace gave greater favours than to any other of His creatures.

We can, therefore, have some idea how, owing to this fidelity, the Maternity enhanced her Purity and added to her merits. For the Incarnation is to all of us the cause and source of merit; and one who, as Mother, was exceptionally connected with this mystery, must have had exceptional occasions for growing in grace. If, before she became Mother, she was Full of Grace, because she was destined for the Maternity, how must she not have abounded still more and more, when her connexion with the source of Grace was constantly doing its work in her regard! We are told of our dear Lord, that *virtue went forth from Him and healed all*,[7] and on that account all the multitude gathered around Him and sought to touch Him. How often did not she touch Him; and to whom did He ever communicate His perfecting power more gladly and more generously than to His own good and faithful Mother? When Almighty God looks down upon the world, He finds reason too frequently to be disappointed, because so little return is made to Him for all that He has done for His creatures; but never was He disappointed with her, who sent back every grace, with its full return of merit to Him, who never wishes one of His words to come back to Him empty and disregarded. It is on this account that the Church tells us of the fitness of the Assumption, and of the great glory given in Heaven to the Immaculately-conceived Mother of God, who went on in her progress from virtue to virtue, until she was admitted to see the God of gods in Sion.[8]

Thus the Maternity was always enabling her to do great things for Him, who had done great things for her. We are assured by our Divine Lord, that fidelity to grace can produce fruit a hundredfold; what was the hundredfold of the Immaculate Conception? What was the immense increase in purity and holiness, which the labours, the sufferings, the sacrifices and obedience of the Maternity secured to her, from whom God demanded much, because He had bestowed so much upon her? If the Church argues, and argues most legitimately, that the Immaculate Conception was a becoming privilege for her, from whom the Redeemer of the world was to take the flesh, in which He was to blot out the

[6] Jude 6. [7] Luke vi. 19. [8] Ps. lxxxiii.

sins of mankind, does it not follow that, when that flesh was assumed and did its work, there was added a great increase of grace and of glory to her, who was the source from which the flesh was received, which brought pardon for sinners and perfection for Saints?

From these Festivals of the Maternity and Purity of our Blessed Lady, we can learn two lessons which it will be of advantage for us to apply for our spiritual profit. First: we must remember that the principle upon which Almighty God acted in regard to His own Mother, is that which He follows in our regard also. He did great things to her, but He expected great things from her. So does He expect from us a proportionate return for what He is always doing in His love and goodness for our souls. The necessity of coöperating with grace is being constantly enforced upon us. It is the frequent theme of the Church, who reminds us, that though without the help of God's grace we can do nothing meritorious of future glory, yet that when grace is given to us, it will not produce its fruit, unless we be faithful in accepting and working with it. At our future judgment, we shall have to answer for the graces which have been given to us; and if it is found that we have received these graces in vain, they will stand against us for our confusion, instead of being reckoned for our reward. From the example, therefore, of our own good and faithful Mother, let us learn this lesson of the necessity of fidelity to grace.

The second lesson which we must learn is that of an increased confidence in the patronage of Mary. The Maternity and Purity combine in inspiring this confidence. She has a double Maternity: she is Mother to Him to whom she prays, and Mother to us for whom she prays. Her Maternity over Him gives her great power: her Maternity over us fills her with mercy. And her Purity, her perfection in Holiness, enhances this intercessory power. For if *the continual prayer of the just man availeth much*, as St. James declares, what must not be the value of the prayer of the purest and holiest of God's creatures! If Abraham had such power over Almighty God, as to make Him hesitate in inflicting punishment upon a wicked city; if Moses could disarm Him, and make Him turn away signs of vengeance which He was on the point of wreaking upon His disobedient people; if Job had influence enough to gain pardon for his false friends; and if Elias could by his prayers close the heavens and open them, to refuse or to grant rain to the earth, what may we not believe must be the efficacy of the prayers of one so far surpassing in holiness, and therefore in favour with God, all the patriarchs and prophets of whom she is the Queen?

For, in the Catholic Church, you know, my dear brethren, and you know it for your comfort and encouragement, the docrine of the Communion of Saints is a reality, which connects us with all the members of the Church, whether living in her militant sphere, or having passed into eternity.

Let it be ours, then, to-day to take up, with thankfulness and the fullest confidence, the address of the Archangel, of St. Elizabeth, and of the Church. We will salute her as Full of Grace, and as Blessed amongst women. We will congratulate her on her dignity of Mother of God, and in the spirit of the noble Council of Ephesus, will venerate and proclaim the title which she deserves because of her Maternity. And reminding her that we are her children, we will beg her to watch over us as she watched over the Child Jesus, and to guard us against all dangers in life and death.

If her Maternity gives her the influence of a Mother, and her Purity the influence of a just one, we have in connexion with these Festivals a double reason for confidence in her protection : and we must be filled with every hope, that our prayers for pardon and mercy before the throne of God will meet with the reward we desire, when they are supported by the intercession of one, to whom the Church addresses the petition which must be repeatedly ours to-day : Mother most Pure, pray for us !

SERMON LXII.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FORGIVENESS AND CONFIDENCE.

Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee. And behold, some of the Scribes said within themselves, He blasphemeth.

In these two sayings which are brought before us in the Gospel of this Sunday, we have two very different utterances, animated by two very different spirits, and creating within us two very different kinds of feeling. Who, when he considers the first saying, dictated by the loving and merciful Heart of our dear Lord: *Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee,* can fail being moved by an admiring love for Him, who spoke such words of pity and affection? And who, when he attends to those other words: *He blasphemeth,* can help being filled with indignation against those who were always watching, tempting, and criticising Him who spoke those first words of mercy, and who were constantly resisting His intentions of love? You see our Divine Redeemer, who was always going about doing good, with an afflicted object brought before Him, to receive a blessing at His hands. It is an opportunity for teaching, and He avails Himself of it. It was not merely nor principally to remedy bodily wants and sufferings, that He had come down from the Bosom of the Eternal Father. He had a higher mission: He came to remove sin and its consequences, and it was thus He was especially to manifest the power of His Divinity. So He says to the poor palsied man: *Thy sins are forgiven thee,* at the same time effecting what those words signified, and conveying pardon to his soul.

I. Let us first recite and consider the fact as it is recorded in the Gospel, and then learn and apply its lesson. Our Blessed Lord is represented as coming into what is called His own city. From St. Mark's Gospel,[1] in which this same miracle is detailed in some points more fully than in St. Matthew's, whose account is read for us to-day, we are told that this city which is called His own, is not Bethlehem where He was born, nor Nazareth

[1] Mark ii. 1; see also à Lapide, in loc.

where He spent most of His earlier life, nor Jerusalem where He suffered, but Capharnaum in which He oftentimes resided during His ministerial life, and which He illustrated by His preaching and by many of His miracles. A poor afflicted man, so completely struck down with palsy as to be unable to walk, is carried in a bed to the place where He is known to be. Doubtless, this poor man had heard of the many cures already wrought in behalf of other sufferers from his own severe illness, and was filled with confidence that even he might be cured as others had been. So he gets himself conveyed into the presence of the merciful bestower of so many favours. There are many obstacles to surmount, but he is full of courage and of hope, and he faces them all. St. Luke, who also records the fact,[2] says that the crowd which surrounded our Lord was so great, that in order to gain admittance into the house in which He was at the time, *they went up upon the roof, and let him down through the tiles, with his bed, into the midst, before Jesus.*

Certainly this was a sign of great confidence, and we can well imagine how our Divine Lord, who always praised and rewarded acts of faith towards Himself, was disposed not to send the good and confiding patient away disappointed. The anxious mother from Canaan, who once came to Him and asked the cure of her daughter, is an instance of the blessing given to those who persevered in urging a request, which was at first pronounced unreasonable and not to be granted. After a first and second refusal, she at last obtained the desired answer: *O woman, great is thy faith, be it done to thee as thou wilt.*[3] And in like manner this poor palsied man knew full well, that if he could only get our Lord to notice him, all would be well with him. And he succeeds, and is brought into His presence, and looks upon the face of the One, who he knew would not dismiss him without a blessing.

Our Lord admires the faith of the palsied man and his bearers; and seeing in the sick man a greater evil than that of his palsy, and an evil of which palsy was a fitting outward symbol, says to him: *Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.* For He was God as well as man; and God sees our heart and conscience, and knows the state of each of us, with reference to the presence of grace within us. He saw in him the sin which he had inherited at his birth: He saw, not improbably, other stains caused by his own personal sins. But He saw also a soul full of confidence and desirous of pardon, and one who had been determined at any cost to partake in the blessing, of which Jesus was the bestower. And, therefore, as if He wished to teach us, that oftentimes when

[2] Luke v. 18, &c. [3] Matt. xv. 28.

we are petitioning for one favour, another greater one, and one more profitable, is granted to us, our Blessed Lord blesses the soul rather than the body of the suppliant, and pronounces upon him the pardon of his sins. Death is the consequence of sin, and sickness is also a result. Our Lord removes that which deserved the sickness, and pronounces upon the palsied man forgiveness for his sins. Happy, indeed, was the sufferer to hear such consoling and encouraging words as were then addressed to him. And we may conceive that he was even then satisfied with the blessing pronounced upon him, and that he felt within himself that the result was really produced, and that his sins were forgiven him.

It is not he that complains. He does not say: I came for one blessing, and You are giving me another. I came to ask for a cure for my palsy, and You pronounce upon me pardon for my sins. The faith which brought him to Jesus would rather have suggested to him acts of thanksgiving for a far greater blessing than he had expected, and he would have been glad enough, we can conceive, to be carried home again, and to be allowed to continue in his infirmity. Let him be dismissed in peace, for his eyes had seen his Saviour. It is not he, then, that complains; but there are complainants, and in no measured terms do they express their feelings. They say within themselves, but distinctly enough to be heard by Him, who saw sin in the soul of the palsied man, and could see the thoughts passing in their minds: *He blasphemeth.* Or according to St. Mark: *Why doth this Man speak thus? He blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins, but God only?*[4] What a contrast is there not, then, between what our dear Lord says, and what is said by His enemies? His are words of mercy and love, and are accompanied by an act of spiritual blessing. Theirs are words of uncharitableness and false judgment, they are interfering with what does not concern them, pronouncing upon what they do not understand, and declaring an act of mercy to be a blasphemy.

Is it not the case, my dear brethren, that this conduct is repeatedly being manifested in respect to the Church, by those who deny her power to forgive sins; by those who are outside of her, and who have never experienced the blessing enjoyed by her children? For who is it really that accuses the Church of blasphemy when she maintains that she has the power, and exercises the power of forgiving sins? It is not those who know her: it is they who do not know her. When she treads in the steps of her Holy Founder, and goes about trying to bring sinners to repentance,

[4] Mark ii. 7.

and then uses in their regard the power which certainly has been bestowed upon her, of saying words which are followed by the effect: *Be of good heart, child, thy sins are forgiven thee*, who is it that murmurs and finds fault? Who is it that says of the Church the very words, literally the same words prepared for the objectors by Scribes and Pharisees: *It is a blasphemy: how can man forgive sins? Surely none can forgive sin but God alone?* They forget, as the Pharisees forgot, that God has given the power of forgiveness to His Church. Our Blessed Lord came, with all power given to Him in Heaven and in earth; and it is Heaven and earth that He combines in the exercise of that power entrusted to His Church, when He says so expressly that forgiveness pronounced upon earth is ratified in Heaven. As then it was not the palsied man who complained, when he received pardon, but the Pharisees, so it is not the child of the Church, but its enemies who complain when that same power is now exercised in behalf of the repentant sinner.

After the protest of these censuring Pharisees, our Blessed Lord, in order to prove by an outward sign the efficacy of the absolution which He had pronounced, orders the palsied man to arise and walk. He does so: he is now cured in body as well as in soul, and all the multitude are filled with wonder. They praise and glorify God for having given such power to man; and it is an act of thanksgiving which is constantly being expressed by crowds of grateful penitents in the Church.

II. But, my dear brethren, you are not to suppose from what has been said, that this encouraging doctrine of Forgiveness of sins is brought before you merely as a matter of controversy. That is not my object. It is true that we cannot read the account of the miracle performed on the palsied man, without regretting that there are so many who do what the Pharisees did, and consider the doctrine of Sacramental Absolution to be a blasphemy. But do all those who profess to believe in this power, use it as they ought to do? This is the question we must attend to: a sacred and practical question, and one which each of us is called upon to consider. Woe be to those who admit the power, and yet will not use the exertion necessary for its application!

What did the palsied man do in order to gain his cure? For from him we can learn our duty, when we apply for a blessing which we know by faith is really within our reach. We will first lay down two principles. One is expressed by St. Gregory the Great, when he tells us that our Divine Lord sometimes teaches us by words, sometimes by facts. For we can well conceive that by wishing so many of His Miracles to be recorded, He intended

them to be included in that general principle expressed by St. Paul, when he says, that *whatsoever things have been written, have been written for our instruction.*[5] Therefore the miracle which we are now considering is intended to teach us. A second principle is that palsy is a symbol of sin, inasmuch as it does to the body what sin does to the soul, makes it helpless, wretched, and in a state of partial death and inactivity. Our Blessed Lord seems directly to teach us this by the miracle of to-day. He sees a palsied man, and He speaks of sin. This principle of analogy between bodily and spiritual ailments is also affirmed by the Church when she speaks of Tepidity and Mortal Sin: the former implying a torpor of the soul, the latter its spiritual death.

The palsied man did what one in a state of sin may imitate. He felt his state, and was determined to make a great effort to be healed. He not simply prayed to God, as from his confidence in our Saviour we may imagine he would have done, but he was resolved to do something more: to have recourse to outward means which he felt were at his disposal. Reports had reached him of One, who was going about doing good to all who came within His reach. He had heard of many wonders achieved in behalf of other sufferers, and he felt that even he might share in blessings which had been so generously bestowed. And so he would have appealed to his friends, and would have asked them to carry him out that he might get into the presence of this kind and powerful benefactor. You, if you look into yourself, and find that there is any palsy about your soul, may indeed call out to God for mercy, and beg of Him as the Psalmist did: *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am sick; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled.*[6] But rest not there. There is an outward act which you can perform. There is within your reach a means which you can adopt, and which can bring a cure to you. It has cured others, and it can cure you.

Have you no sins or miseries from which you wish to gain relief? Do you not feel within you the thorn which is fastened, and have you not reason to turn about in your anguish, until it is removed? Power has been left upon earth, which, if you wish it, can be exercised in your regard. Even you can go and ask for its application, and words can and will be pronounced over you: *Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Let others who believe not in this power, call it blasphemy: you know better; and you know that the words when pronounced will be followed by the effect, and that the pardon pronounced upon earth will be sanctioned in Heaven. It may cost you an

[5] Rom. xv. 4. [6] Ps. vi.

effort, but what of that, when you remember the reward that will follow? Was there no impediment in the way of that poor palsied man, when he could not even move of himself, but had to be carried by others, lifted at great risk to the top of a house, and let down through the roof? But what did all this matter, when he felt such confidence in the result which he knew would follow? He was full of confidence, that, though he approached Jesus in the midst of such difficulties, he would be able to return actively home, and that, though he was sowing in tears, he would reap in joy. And so the palsied man teaches us a lesson of earnestness and determination, and inspires us by his example to surmount difficulties, and secure the pardon and relief which we so much require.

And what does the conduct of our Blessed Lord teach us, and how does it not encourage us? There is not a word of rebuke. He does not tell the patient, that his sickness was the result of his own negligence: that it was a well-deserved punishment for sins which he had wilfully committed. Not a word of censure is heard, but words inspiring confidence and conveying forgiveness: *Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.* He is exhorted to be of good heart, and to be full of confidence. This certainly cannot have been wanting. Unless he had been of good heart and full of hope, he never would have done what he had done. His coming to Jesus was a sign of confidence. But it was until then only a kind of general, vague, and remote confidence. A special and immediate act, in the presence of Him to whom he had appealed, is required, and it is to that act that pardon is to be attached. We may easily have this kind of general theoretical confidence. It follows from our faith. For, we believe that in the Sacrament of Penance sins are forgiven, and therefore we have confidence in the efficacy of the Sacrament. But we must approach to it personally. We must go and have the words of pardon pronounced directly and immediately over ourselves; and it is only when these words are applied personally to us, that we shall have done what the palsied man did, and shall share his blessing.

And what a reward will be ours, when we shall find the change that will come upon us, when our palsy leaves us, and we are restored to our former innocence!—our merits which had been lost, are all restored to us, and we become objects of joy to Angels and of complacency to God. Let others who know not this blessing doubt, deny, and censure its use. We shall know and feel its presence within us, and our own experience will be the best answer we can make to such objectors. What could the palsied

man have thought of those who denied our Divine Lord's power, when he felt its results so really within himself? The Pharisees were always denying the supernatural acts of our Blessed Redeemer, and even when they saw them performed in their own presence, they were so hardened that they would not believe. But what was the case with those who had received in their own case the benefit of His power? When the blind man was restored to sight, the Pharisees persecuted him on that very account, and drove him away from their presence. But he became a disciple of Jesus. He believed in His Divinity, *fell down and adored Him*.[7] So must we, though others may find fault with us, thankfully acknowledge the existence of a power which has been left in the Church for our comfort, and with the fullest confidence have recourse to its application.

We read in the Fourth Book of Kings, that when Elias the great Prophet of Israel was about to be taken up into Heaven, his disciple Eliseus, who was destined to inherit his office, and had been anointed by him as his successor,[8] clung to his master and would not leave him. When at last they arrived together at the spot where the fiery chariot was to carry up the master into Heaven, Elias bade his disciple ask for a parting gift. And Eliseus made bold to beg that he would bestow upon him his double spirit,[9] of prophecy and miracles. The mantle of Elias fell upon him, and his request was granted. And so Eliseus became what Elias had been, and manifested everywhere by wisdom and power that the prophetical office had devolved upon him. So is it with the Church in regard to her Holy Founder. His double spirit has fallen upon her. He has given to her the Spirit of Truth, by which she is guarded against error in her teaching; and He has given to her the ministerial power of doing what He Himself has done, and to perform even greater miracles than His own.[10] She can do what He did, because He has given to her all that power which, as man, He had received from His Father. She can, therefore, extend her hand over the penitent sinner who comes to her in sorrow and confidence, and can say: *Be of good heart, child, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

The power of forgiving sins is one of the gifts which we should have expected that our good and merciful Lord would have left in His Church. He was always labouring amongst sinners, and constantly exhorted His Apostles to imitate His example. Into them He would have infused the spirit of compassion, and would have bestowed upon them the means of exercising it in behalf of

[7] John ix. 38.
[8] 3 Kings xix. 16.
[9] 4 Kings ii. 9.
[10] John xiv. 12.

poor sinners. His words to sinners were words which inspired confidence: *Come to Me, all you that are heavy-burdened:* and what burden is heavier than that of sin? His Parables tell of this same spirit of compassion, for what other spirit dictated such consoling truths as are inculcated in the Parables of the Good Samaritan, the Good Shepherd, and the Prodigal Son? His Miracles bore evidence of the same, for they were constantly wrought in favour of those that were afflicted, and who bore about them ailments which were figures of sin.

To His Church, therefore, He says: Do not drive away sinners, but go in search of them. Speak to them words which will inspire confidence, and then in My name heal them and pardon them. *Whosesoever sins you forgive, they are forgiven them. Whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, it shall be loosed in Heaven.* And to sinners He says: *Go, show yourselves to the priests.* I have left power with them, especially for your benefit. Have confidence, and your sins will be forgiven. It is for you especially that I came upon earth, and it is for you I remain there for ever, even to the end of the world, labouring through the ministry of My own Church, and bestowing pardon in proportion to love.

When, then, we feel upon ourselves the cruel pressure of the hard chains of sin; when under its influence we are paralysed in our efforts towards gaining Heaven, and feel the necessity of having recourse to a means for regaining our strength and activity, it will not be our unhappy lot to deny what has been expressly instituted for our own good. We will place ourselves in the position in which we can secure for our own immediate benefit the application of a power which we acknowledge to exist; and when we hear pronounced over our head the words: *Be of good heart, child, thy sins are forgiven thee,* we will join with the Angels who will be rejoicing at our pardon, and with the crowds of penitents we will gladly praise and *glorify God, who hath given such power unto men.*

SERMON LXIII.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Come ye to the marriage.

The Gospel of this Sunday comes very appropriately and suggestively after that which the Church brought before us for our instruction on Sunday last. And we may well conceive that it is not an accident, but a design, upon the part of the Church, which thus connects them together. For as the miracle upon the palsied man tells us of the power and mercy of our Divine Lord in regard to one Sacrament—that in which forgiveness of sins is conveyed to us—the parable of the marriage-banquet reminds us of another, the holiest of all the Sacraments, in which our dearest and most loving Saviour invites and draws us to the closest union with Himself. And the Gospel, in which the means of obtaining forgiveness are suggested, comes immediately before that in which the invitation to the banquet is conveyed, just as the former of these Sacraments is an ordinary and important act in preparation for the latter.

And in the manner of treating our subject we may, to some extent, follow the plan which we pursued last Sunday. Then our Blessed Lord instructed us by a miracle, to-day it is by a parable; or, to remind ourselves of the words of St. Gregory which we then cited, we find our Lord teaching sometimes by words, and sometimes by facts. We then considered what the palsied man did in evidence of his confidence, and what our dear Saviour did in rewarding this confidence by forgiveness. To-day we may consider what, with reference to Holy Communion, our good God does in giving His invitation, and what we ought to do with regard to the fact, and the manner of accepting it. There are two stages in the conduct of the king, who gives the marriage-feast, which it will be of great advantage for us to attend to—the invitation, which was so general, and the scrutiny into the character of his guests, which was so searching and particular.

I. The Marriage-feast instinctively reminds us of the Blessed Sacrament; for we cannot help, whenever we hear of Almighty God preparing a feast, and inviting guests to attend it, thinking

of that great and most loving Mystery, in which He has given to us so many striking signs of His abundant generosity. The Blessed Sacrament is certainly too great a reality ever to be forgotten in the Church. The presence of our dear Lord with us in this Mystery is properly called the Real Presence; and realities cannot be passed over in forgetfulness. When, then, our Blessed Redeemer, the Institutor of this sacred Mystery, spoke the parable which comes home to us with such literal truth, He must have thought of the future time in which, what He had already designed in His Sacred Heart would be in full working, and in which a Banquet for which Angels, or those who rivalled Angels in purity and love, were fitting guests, would stand in constant preparation, and to which those would be invited who were willing and ready to receive the summons.

Already, indeed, at the time that He spoke the parable, it was meeting with its fulfilment in one meaning. The Mystery of the Incarnation illustrates the marriage-feast; for in this Mystery the Divine Word takes unto Himself our human nature, as if united with it in marriage; for as those that are married become *two in one flesh*, so in the Incarnation we have two natures united in the One Person of the Son of God. And with all the joy which accompanies a marriage, the feast to which the guests are invited being one expression of this joy, does our dearest Lord assume the nature of man, in order that He may satisfy His Love in redeeming the world. Too truly do other details of the parable meet with their fulfilment in the instance of our Incarnate Lord; for how few followed Him and accepted His invitation to come and sit at His table, and be numbered amongst His disciples! How ill-treated were the messengers who conveyed the gracious summons! Prophets, who foretold the Mystery, were abused and put to death; and Apostles, who are commissioned to announce its glad tidings in every nation, are forewarned to expect the same treatment. Nay, more than this, we know how the very Son Himself, in whose honour the marriage-feast was being celebrated, was treated by those to whom He came bearing His message of mercy and peace.

In how many nations also has the parable been verified in the history of their conversion to the faith! Apostles and Martyrs are frequently synonymous terms. One who goes to preach the Gospel amongst those to whom it had been before unknown, must make up his mind to endure great things in the noble cause committed to him. He goes to invite guests to a feast, and he must expect to be treated contumeliously. When the Church entered upon her first struggle with the world, for three centuries she had to

labour in the midst of contradictions and persecution. She was God's messenger, but the world would not welcome her. She had great blessings to bestow, but men were unwilling to receive them. What was true of her Founder was true also of her; she came to her own, because the world was handed over to her to be converted by her; but her own would not receive her. Men loved darkness better than light; and when holy preachers wished to enlighten them, they were resisted, rejected, and put to death. Thus was the Parable very literally fulfilled.

But it is in the Mystery of the Blessed Sacrament, we have said, that the fulfilment is constantly manifesting itself. This Mystery is not only the compendium of all the wonders of God, but of His contradictions also. Whatever He met with during His life, and whatever the Church has met with in her missionary work, the Blessed Sacrament has to meet with also, and is continually, therefore, verifying the Parable. The Incarnation is continued in the Blessed Sacrament; for the same who became man for the redemption of the world is He who here resides with us for ever, inviting all to come to Him, and blessing and sanctifying those who accept the invitation. And we cannot imagine the Church without the Blessed Sacrament; for It is everything to her: It is her support in labour, her comfort in distress, her joy and glory in the days of peace and triumph. It is her very soul and life; for Jesus, who is concealed under the Sacramental veil, is also hidden in the Church within which He dwells, and whose destinies He is ever directing.

How is it that our good and merciful God has acted towards man, and always is acting in this Adorable Sacrament? Just like the king who prepared the marriage-feast. There are pressing invitations distributed generously around. The world was prepared for this wonderful Mystery many centuries before its institution, and remote invitations were even then given to love and welcome such a proof of God's love. When, in the Manna which supported the pilgrim Israelites for forty years in the desert, God was giving a *bread from Heaven filled with every delight*;[1] when the Psalmist sang of the loveliness of the tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts, and declared that his soul was longing and fainting after the courts of God;[2] when one chosen spot was marked out by the Almighty in which He declared that His eyes and His heart would remain for ever;[3] when there was One of whom the wise man was inspired to say that His delights were to be with the children of men;[4] when God established the law

[1] Wisd. xvi. 20.
[2] Ps. lxxxiii.
[3] 3 Kings ix. 3.
[4] Prov. viii. 31.

of sacrifice, and declared Himself to be well-pleased in the oblations thus made to Him by His people; when the mysterious King Melchisedech offered his clean sacrifice of bread and wine,[5] and Malachy foretold of the days in which a similar oblation would be offered up throughout the whole world continuously,[6] something was indicated which the faithful and devout children of the olden dispensation recognised as one of the great blessings in store for the happier and more privileged days, which were to witness the coming of Him for whom they were praying, and at whose distant sight they rejoiced. Thus was the world prepared and invited towards this Mystery of Love.

And when our Divine Lord became incarnate and was born into the world, in choosing the place of His Birth, which the Prophet Micheas had foretold,[7] He seems to have thought of this Mystery, for Bethlehem signifies the 'House of bread.' Thither did He invite the shepherds and the wise men of the Epiphany to adore Him, even as by the Lamp of the Sanctuary He invites adorers now. And although it was not to be until the end of His Life that He was to institute this great Sacrament, He invited believers long before, when towards the commencement of His ministerial labours He foretold what He was one day to do, when He was to give Himself as Bread for the food of His children, and the Bread that He was to give was to be His Flesh for the life of the world. Many of those that were then invited to believe in this Mystery, we know, did not obey the summons: several abandoned Him, and would follow Him no longer.

At last the time for which He longed so eagerly arrived, and on the night before He suffered, meeting His Apostles for the last time, He fulfils His promise; He satisfies His love; He gives Himself to them under the form of Bread; He bestows upon them power to do what He then did, and the Blessed Sacrament becomes a reality in the Church. From that day until now how many invitations has not our dearest Lord been giving to His children to come to Him for refreshment, and to taste and see how sweet He is! For more than eighteen hundred years He has been engaged in His work of love, drawing hearts towards Himself, and ready to welcome all who hear His words of invitation. Not in one place alone is He to be found, as in the days of His visible ministry, when He passed from town to town or from street to street, but upon every Catholic Altar He reposes during the Holy Sacrifice: in every tabernacle He takes up His abode, and thus makes Himself at one and the same time accessible to all who are willing to visit Him. So that what is to un-

[5] Gen. xiv. 18. [6] Mal. i. 11. [7] Mich. v. 2.

believers a difficulty which seems hard to them to solve, that the sacred Body of our Lord should be in many places at one and the same time, is precisely what He intended when to each of the Apostles He gave the power to consecrate as He Himself had done at the last supper, and to ordain others in every nation to share in the marvellous power with which the Priesthood is invested.

Thousands upon thousands have obeyed His call, and have found Him to be everything that their hearts could desire. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in Sacramental and Spiritual Communions, in Visits to the Adorable Sacrament, they have lived under His shadow, fulfilling what Jeremias had said in his Lamentations over Jerusalem: *Under Thy shadow we shall live among the Gentiles.*[8] In them our dear Lord has not been disappointed. He has rewarded them for their devotedness, has supported them in all their labours, strengthened them in temptation, helped them to persevere, and has proved Himself to be the Bread of the strong, and the life of their souls.

Yet, unfortunately, the parable has been fulfilled in the rejection of His loving invitation by so very many who refuse to come. The doctrine of the Real Presence, which was rejected by those carnal-minded Jews of whom we read in the sixth chapter of St. John, even when our Divine Lord Himself taught and declared it, is disbelieved by many who profess to accept the Gospel, and to continue to be followers of Him who has given us such a proof of His love. *How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?* is what they ask, as if they were unconscious at the time that they were repeating the very words of the first disbelievers. Last Sunday we heard the same objectors taking up the words of the Pharisees against one Sacrament: *How can this Man forgive sins?* and now they adopt their thought and expression against another: and on this account they leave the Church, and will walk with her no more. We may be astonished, in reading to-day's parable, at any invited guests refusing to attend on so great and honourable an occasion as a marriage-feast of a king's son; yet much more wonderful is what we witness every day, and all around us, the rejection of this sweetest of truths by those who are invited to believe in it on so many grounds, but persist in their denial.

Wonderful, indeed, and most melancholy, is this rejection of the invitation so graciously accorded. But is there not another class whose rejection is still more astonishing? That Jesus, in this Adorable Mystery, should be abandoned by those who do not

[8] Lam. iv. 20.

believe in Him, is one thing: that He should be practically abandoned by those who do believe in Him, is another and a more deplorable wonder. And yet it is the case that our dear Lord is slighted and avoided by too many of those who profess to believe in His Presence in the Blessed Eucharist, and yet never care to approach Him, or do so in an unworthy and unprepared state. Is it not of these that Almighty God is made to complain in such affectionate and yet such bitterly reproachful terms through the Psalmist: *If My enemy had reviled Me, I would indeed have borne with it. And if he that hated Me had spoken great things against Me, I would perhaps have hidden Myself from him; but thou, a man of one mind with Me, my guide, and my familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with Me, in the house of God we walked with consent.*[9] Those who were invited to the king's marriage-feast, and yet so ungratefully despised the summons, we may suppose were not strangers but friends; for it is not usual on such occasions to invite those who are unknown. And it was this contempt which angered the king and made him punish the offenders. Must it not provoke God's indignation, and call for His punishment, as it provokes our astonishment also, when we think of it, that Catholics who had been prepared in early days of innocence for their first Communion, and had for a time been devout frequenters of the Sacraments, begin by degrees to fall away, diminish their Communions, prepare for them less frequently, become heedless about the Holy Mass, give up their custom of visiting the Blessed Sacrament, and at last begin to cease all intercourse with this Mystery of Mercy and Love? *Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have brought up children, and have exalted them, but they have despised Me.*[10]

Thus the first part of the parable is too frequently illustrated. An invitation most honourable and most to be valued is given, and given most generously, but it is rejected.

II. Some there are who accept the invitation, and come to the marriage-feast, and what about them? Are they all that they ought to be? The king was anxious to have guests, but most particular as to their bearing and character. He wished his guests to remember, that although he was so desirous to have a full attendance, he was still a king, and would be treated as such. And, therefore, when they were all assembled and had taken their places, he goes round and sees whether they had all come properly prepared for so honourable a privilege as to assist at the marriage-feast of his own son. Amongst them is found one who had neglected what was required: he had yielded to the pressing

[9] Ps. liv. [10] Is. i. 2.

invitation, but he had been careless in coming, forgetting altogether both the person and place with which he was dealing. Others had attired themselves as they ought to have done: he had not done so, and therefore he is ordered to be ignominiously cast forth and to be duly punished for his disrespect. What are we to learn from this? Something, certainly, is intended; and what is it?

Great is the fault of those who reject the invitation of our dear Lord to believe in Him, and to approach to Him in this Adorable Sacrament; but greater is the fault of those who would presume to come to It in an unworthy and an unprepared state. It is not now of others you are to think, and to express regret or astonishment that they should refuse an invitation to believe in a truth so dear to every Catholic, and so clearly taught and valued by our Divine Lord. This invitation you have received and have accepted; but in what manner do you come to the Marriage-feast? Or, in other words, how do you behave towards the Blessed Sacrament, whose Real Presence you admit?

The king in the Parable is represented as going round when his guests were at last assembled, and examining how each individual member had prepared for the glad occasion. One is found without the wedding-garment; and although the king had been so eager to find guests, as to send into the highways, and to order compulsion, that he might have a full attendance, yet he shows himself to be using a severity in his scrutiny, which we might scarcely expect from one who had had recourse to such means of filling up his seats. But this shows us that our dear Lord is eager about two things with regard to Himself residing with us in this sacred Mystery. He wishes to be known; but He insists upon being dealt with only by those who are holy. The wedding-garment implies the state of grace, and this our Divine Saviour insists upon as essential for those who would accept His invitation and come to Him.

Whoever puts on the wedding-garment has two acts to perform: he has to put off his other garments, and he has to clothe himself in the requisite one. It is like St. Paul's lesson, so frequently inculcated, of putting off the old man, and putting on the new. Our preparation for Holy Communion always implies the two steps here alluded to. We must free ourselves from grievous sin, and we must clothe our soul with the virtues which will make it fit to come into the presence of the King of Angels. We can imagine that many of those who rejected the invitation, and made such unworthy excuses for their refusal, declined the call just because they were expected to make an effort in duly preparing

themselves. When we ask those who stay away from Holy Communion, and can only be induced to approach on rare occasions, and after constant and earnest representations from their pastors, to declare honestly their reason, must they not admit that the effort required for preparation is more than they are disposed to make, and that therefore spiritual sloth is the real cause of their abandonment of a duty, which saints have loved as the sweetest which ever devolved upon man, and which even Angels may envy? And this is their return for all that their Lord has done for them! He has humbled Himself in this Mystery of Love, even more than in the Incarnation; He shows such patience in waiting for His children to come to Him, and rewards them so abundantly when they do come; but these ungenerous souls feel it too much to make the effort of preparation, and will not come. Can such ones ever dare to blame others who do not believe, when they, who say they believe, are thus ungrateful?

And they who do approach, can they say that they are as careful as they ought to be in the work of preparation? You know how eager the Church is upon this point, and how she begs of her ministers, to whom is confided the care of the Sacred Mystery, to be circumspect as to whom they admit to this most holy duty, and to be diligent in inculcating the necessity of a fitting preparation. The Catechism of the Council of Trent, our safe and practical guide in pastoral duties, bids us detail what the manner of this preparation should be. The first act must be that of lively faith, by which we acknowledge that we are *discerning the Body of our Lord*,[11] as St. Paul insists. Next, we are to be satisfied that we are at peace with our neighbour; otherwise, as our Blessed Lord admonishes, we must fear to approach the Altar.[12] A marriage-feast implies union; and surely they are unfit to attend it who fail in charity. Again, those that approach Holy Communion must *prove themselves*, and place themselves in a state of grace by previous confession, in case they are conscious to themselves of mortal sin. The state of grace is truly the wedding-garment, which must be put on when we deal with this tremendous Mystery. We must also prepare ourselves by previous fervent prayer, especially by acts of faith, humility, and love. It is thus that we shall be duly corresponding with the gracious invitation of our dear Lord, and shall not be disappointing Him either by refusing to come, or by coming unworthily and unprepared.

O, my dear brethren, let us live up to our principles, and try to make our most loving Saviour the return which He deserves,

[11] 1 Cor. x. 29. [12] Matt. v. 24.

and which He so strictly exacts in this Most Holy Sacrament. Let us enliven our faith, our confidence, and our love; and assuredly we should not require the argument of compulsion to be added to the most merciful invitation accorded to us. What a happiness and privilege is it not for us to know the Mystery which is hidden from others! What more can we desire in heaven or on earth than what is given to us in this treasury of grace? Shall we, then, allow indolence to keep us away, or carelessness to allow us to approach unworthily? Just because others disbelieve and are disloyal, greater zeal and fervour is demanded from us. Ours ought to be the spirit of St. Peter, who, when others abandoned our dear Lord because He told them that He would give them Himself as the food of their souls, so fervently exclaimed, on being asked whether he would also go away: *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.*[13]

Suppose that now our dearest Lord, silent in His love, and asking others to plead for Him, whilst He waits so patiently for the result, were to come forward and examine those who are assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, and are therefore present at His Marriage-feast, and single out those that have not on the wedding-garment. To one He might say: Why, if you really believe in Me, are you so reluctant to come to Me, and to receive in Holy Communion the dearest pledge of My love? To others He might address a reproach because of their careless and distracted demeanour during the Holy Sacrifice, being present with their body, but their heart far from Him, and filled with wrong attachments and thoughts of the world. Of another He might ask why, if he believes in His Real Presence, he always avoids Him, never visits Him in His quiet home, where He is all the day long holding out His hands to a people who contradict Him. Just because others do not believe in Me, I expect more from you in compensation, might He say to all of us, who do regard this sacred Mystery as the greatest treasure which the earth possesses—greater than which even Heaven can give us nothing.

Surely we all know our duty towards our dearest Lord in this Mystery of Love. It only remains for us to do it—to accept His invitation, but to accept it with due respect. To know our duty can avail us nothing, if we do it not. To know is to be called; to do is a sign of being chosen. The first has been given to us; the second is in our hands to accept or refuse. Do what you know you ought to do, and you will be not only amongst the called, which is given to many, but also amongst the chosen, which is the privilege of the happy few.

[13] John vi. 69.

SERMON LXIV.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

CONFIDENCE AND PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER.

Come down before my child dies.

It would not be easy to find a more instructive and a more encouraging lesson and illustration of the immense efficacy of prayer, than that which is brought before us in the touching event which is recorded in the Gospel of this Sunday. You know how our most merciful Saviour was always teaching the importance and the necessity of prayer, and how, in order to encourage us to attend to the lesson, He repeatedly promised the greatest blessings to those who practised it; and how He declared that results, which in the order of nature would seem impossible, would attend upon those who would pray, but would pray with confidence and perseverance. Not in word alone did He inculcate this lesson; He practised prayer as man, and He was constantly rewarding prayer as God. And amongst the lessons which He wishes His Church to teach and to be constantly impressing, are those which concern His favourite theme of prayer. What, therefore, we find to have been urged by St. Peter, St. Paul, St. James, and St. John, in their inspired Epistles, has been anxiously enforced in every age and every place, as a great Christian duty, and a proof of Christian faith, hope, love, and obedience.

I have said that the beautiful instance in to-day's Gospel is instructive and encouraging. Two qualities which ought always to accompany prayer it especially teaches and illustrates, and one objection against the efficacy of prayer it powerfully overthrows. For there really is such a fact as an objection against the efficacy of prayer. It is the objection of those who say that they have been disappointed; they have prayed, and have not obtained. It is an objection as old as the days of St. James, who states and answers it, when he alludes to those who ask and receive not, because they ask amiss. Those who thus object are citing their

own authority against that of Almighty God, the Author of the law of prayer. They are bringing forward their own experience against the testimony of Sacred Scripture, and the experience of the Saints of the Church. Want of success on their part is no argument against the efficacy of prayer, for which our Divine Lord so strongly vouches. It is but an admission that there are faults on their own part—that their prayer is not really what it ought to be—that it is wanting in something which is essential to it, and which is sure to gain success. Most probably the qualities which are wanting in such unsuccessful suitors at the throne of God, are those which the ruler in to-day's Gospel so strikingly manifested—Confidence and Perseverance.

Let us all try to learn the lesson taught us by our Blessed Lord, through the manner in which He granted the petition of the anxious father. And if at any time we are tempted to be faint-hearted in the duty of prayer, and to give it up because we think we are not heard, let us turn our thoughts to the example which is here set before us, and then urge ourselves to persevere.

I. Confidence and perseverance mutually imply each other, and therefore we need not consider them separately, but make them go hand in hand in our explanation, as they must be found combined together in practice. Confidence is a state of soul in which we are convinced that God can and will grant the petition which is addressed to Him. A first refusal, or repeated refusals do not stand in its way. These are but trials of confidence, and give the occasion for perseverance. If every time we prayed, Almighty God instantly granted our request, there would be no room for faith in the exercise of prayer. It would belong to the order of visible experience, rather than to the order of the invisible and the supernatural. Refusals on God's part do not imply rejection: they give occasion for returning to the work, and for showing by perseverance that our confidence is unshaken. We find the union of confidence and perseverance repeatedly illustrated by earnest men in the world. Those who succeed in the great battle of life are not ordinarily the ones who at the outset have had everything quite smooth and easy before them; but it is they who are conscious of an inward power, are aware that they must meet with difficulties which at times will seem to baffle them, but who struggle on with a brave and determined spirit, and at last acquire a success well-earned, and on that account more likely to be lasting. What is quickly gained, is quickly lost; but what has been attained with constant labour bears with it a pledge of stability.

Let us study the case of the ruler, and we shall see how per-

severance was a test of confidence. Our Divine Lord had now entered upon His missionary career, and had begun to make His fame known by the signs and wonders which accompanied Him. He is returning after some interval to Cana of Galilee, where He had performed His first miracle, by changing water into wine at the marriage-feast. The ruler, who is introduced to us in to-day's Gospel, was living at Capharnaum, a distance of fourteen hours[1] from Cana. He must have heard of the miracle of Cana, and of others which had followed; for he is moved to do something very extraordinary, and what, only for the high motive which influenced him, would seem very unnatural. His son is dangerously ill, and we can conceive the anxiety with which he had been watching over him, and applying every remedy for the cure of one so dear to him. But there is no room for hope: the sickness has made fearful progress, and the narrative tells us *he was at the point of death*. And it is at this time of all others, when we should suppose that a father would be the last person to abandon his dying child, that he makes up his mind to start upon such a long journey, which he could not and did not accomplish until the following day.

He must have felt within him an impulse which he could not and did not resist, to have recourse to other means to secure what natural means had been unable to gain for him. He must have heard that there was One going about and doing good to all who had recourse to Him. Capharnaum was such a favourite city of our Blessed Lord's that it was sometimes called His own city. There He was known for His works of compassion and His miracles; and the ruler felt convinced, full of confidence, that his son would survive his absence, and would be restored to health, could he but induce this good and powerful Benefactor to come and do for him what he had done for so many others who had had recourse to Him. And so he hastens on his mission.

When he meets our Blessed Lord, he proffers at once his bold request. He tells Him that he had left his son several miles off at the point of death, and he begs Him to come at once all that distance and heal him. A bold request, indeed, it was; for he was asking our Lord to break in upon the duties upon which He was then engaged, and lay every other work aside, and attend only to him. He is received with apparent coolness; and our Divine Lord, instead of at once rewarding him for such confidence as he had manifested, by coming at such a time and from so great a distance to acknowledge His power, says to him: You are one of those who are always seeking extraordinary signs in order

[1] See à Lapide.

to convince you of what you ought to believe upon evidence which is already sufficient. *Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not.* The poor anxious father is not discouraged; he does not argue with our Lord, and say, as he might have said, that the very fact of his having come all that distance, with his heart full of anxiety about his dying child, was a sufficient proof that he was already convinced of what He could do, if He only wished to do it; but he says feelingly, *O Lord, do come down before my son dies.* I want no signs or wonders; I know what You can do, do come at once and do it.

See here how confidence and perseverance are combined together, and how perseverance is a proof of confidence. If the first request is not enough, it is repeated. The ruler knew, without the least doubt, that our Lord could grant his request, and he knew that He would grant it. He is determined to obtain it, and he insists upon it. Our most merciful Saviour sees his spirit, and now grants what he had asked for: *Go thy way, thy son liveth.* No further sign or proof is required, as we oftentimes read was granted in the cases in which the prophets performed the wonders which Almighty God enabled them to work; as when Isaias, upon announcing the cure of King Ezechias, ordered the sun, as a sign of the miracle, to retrace its journey by ten lines.[2] But *the man believed the word which Jesus said to him, and went his way.* He had come full of confidence; he had testified this confidence by his perseverance; and he now feels himself rewarded. He has no doubt about his son's cure; and with a light and grateful heart he hastens home. But before he has time to reach it, messengers hurry on to meet him with the glad tidings that his son had been suddenly cured at the very moment that he had been showing his confidence by the perseverance with which he had urged his petition.

This was by no means the only occasion on which our Divine Lord taught the lesson of the necessity of persevering in prayer as a proof of confidence. In that same Cana in which He granted the petition of the ruler, He had, when He performed His first miracle at His good Mother's request, acted on the same principle. He wished to teach us, through her, what prayer can do when persevered in. She quietly becomes the petitioner in behalf of others, doing then what she is always doing now, gaining relief for those who have recourse to her, and suggests their wants, saying: *They have no wine.* When her Divine Son at first seems to demur to what He knew she was asking for, she does not give up the cause she had adopted; but with the fullest confidence

[2] Isaias xxxviii. 8.

that what she requested would never be refused, even if she was begging Him to anticipate the time in which He was to enter upon His course of miracles, she bids the waiters do what she felt they would be ordered. And we know how the favour was granted.

And we have a most striking instance in the case of the Chananæan woman, who came with great importunity to beg for the cure of her afflicted daughter.[3] Our Blessed Lord intended to grant her request, for He did so; but how does He act? He tries her confidence by seeing whether she would persevere in spite of a first and second refusal. She calls out loudly for mercy, but He *answered her not a word*. And then, struck by His silence and His seeming neglect of the poor mother, His disciples call His attention, and intervene in her behalf. He answers that she was a stranger, unworthy of His blessing, because He had come only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But she is not discouraged; she again in a posture of adoration cries out: *Lord, do help me!* Again she is refused; and our Lord tells her that the bread of the children was not to be cast to dogs: apparently, indeed, a very severe and trying rebuke. But still she perseveres, and asks that only a few of the crumbs might be given to her out of the abundance which He had to distribute. Then she hears the consoling words: *O woman, great is thy faith! be it done to thee as thou wilt.* She is rewarded because she persevered.

Nay, we may even point to the example of our dear Saviour Himself in the way in which He was treated by the Eternal Father at the time of His bitter Agony in Gethsemani. He prays in great anguish for strength and comfort in the sorrow with which He is then overwhelmed. It is not at once that the consoling Angel comes to Him to whisper the words of encouragement of which he was the bearer from Heaven. He continues His prayer, broken up into three parts by His visits to His three companion Apostles, and it is at the end that He feels Himself braced up to enter upon the dreadful course of His Passion. The Angel has comforted Him, and He arises, summons His Apostles to follow Him, and goes bravely forward to meet His enemies.

The strongest instance, perhaps, which the Sacred Scriptures contain of what may be called the Omnipotence of prayer when persevered in, is that which is related of Moses in his influence with Almighty God. It seems so strong a case that we should scarcely conceive it to be otherwise than exaggerated, if it were

[3] Matt. xv. 22, &c.

not recorded for us under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The Israelites had provoked the anger of God by the sin of idolatry, adoring the golden calf which they had set up, and to which they offered sacrifice, proclaiming it to have been their deliverer out of Egypt. The Almighty declares to Moses His determination to destroy them utterly, because of their rebellion against Him; and knowing that Moses would pray for them, and that, if so, He would have to yield to the prayer, He forbids him to pray in their behalf, and says to him: *Let Me alone, that My wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them.*[4] But Moses knew how true God was always to the promise He had made in behalf of earnest, confident, and persevering prayer, and he beseeches Him through the love He bore to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, not to give the Egyptians cause to rejoice at the destruction of His people, but to turn away His anger and to show His wonted mercy. And we read what was the result: *And the Lord was appeased from doing the evil which He had spoken against His people.* Thus did Almighty God show that the law of prayer must take its course, and that His Mercy could not resist its power.

Surely we cannot want instances beyond these to encourage us to persevere confidently in prayer, and never to despair of its power. The wise man admonishes us: *Be not faint-hearted in thy mind; neglect not to pray.*[5] And through all these instances Almighty God speaks to us, as He once spoke to His people through the Prophet Isaias: *Say to the faint-hearted: take courage and fear not.*[6]

II. When we consider the nature and the law of prayer, we cannot help recognising the necessity of confidence and perseverance as among its qualities. If prayer were merely of man's origin, and were but an aspiration of the human heart, desiring help from some Being greater than itself, it might be undertaken with great hesitation. Under such circumstances man might perhaps expect to hear Almighty God answer with a decided and an intended refusal. God might be conceived as saying: I have done enough for you. I have given you powers equal to your work, and I must leave you to use them as best you may. But, thanks be to God, prayer is not of man's invention! It is God's law upon man. It is not a permission merely, it is a law. Therefore whenever we pray to God, we are doing what He demands of us. We are fulfilling His Will. And as He promises a reward to all who keep His commandments and do His Will, prayer must have its reward, and cannot be unacceptable to its

[4] Exod. xxxii. 10. [5] Eccles. vii. 9. [6] Is. xxxv. 4.

Author. Therefore confidence must accompany it; for to doubt its efficacy with God would be equivalent to denying that He made the law and wishes its observance.

Prayer has also been established by Almighty God as a condition by which He declares that He will hold Himself bound: *Ask, and you shall receive.*[7] In these few and simple words, perfectly intelligible, is contained the expression of the contract which our good God has made with us. He prescribes what we must do; we must ask. He declares what the result will be; we shall receive. And when we remember that this is a compact made by a God who can do whatever He wills, and who will do what He has promised, what room is there for hesitation as to the result? The motive of hope is the Power of God, His Goodness, and His Fidelity to His promises; and when under the influence of such a motive we pray to Him, we cannot mistrust Him. To pray without confidence is not to pray. It is an idle act which is fruitless in its result, because it is wanting in what is essential to it. If we doubt whether Almighty God will grant us what we ask for, we are questioning either His Power to satisfy us, or His Goodness in sympathising with us, or His Truthfulness and Fidelity. To pray with such a hesitating spirit is, therefore, an offence against faith as well as against hope. In the noble second chapter of Ecclesiasticus, in which the wise man is giving a series of exhortations to confidence in God, he says to us: *My children, behold the generations of men, and know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded.*[8] In accordance with this same spirit St. Paul exhorts us: *Let us go therefore to the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid.*[9]

The rewards which Almighty God has given to those who have prayed to Him with confidence, and have shown their confidence by persevering in prayer, ought to encourage us, and never allow us to despond. *Because he hath hoped in Me, I will deliver him,*[10] is the declaration which He makes through the Psalmist, in regard to every one who has placed trust in Him. And although, as we observed at the commencement, persons will sometimes cite their own experience, and say that they have prayed and have not been heard, it cannot be that Almighty God is untrue to His word. Let the prayers of such objectors be analysed, and it will be found that the fault is with themselves, and most likely it will consist in the absence of confidence and perseverance. Just to request a favour of God, and then to turn off in a distracted manner with

[7] John xvi. 24.
[8] Ecclus. ii. 11.
[9] Heb. iv. 16.
[10] Ps. xc.

the heart full of worldly attachments, and almost to forget what we had been praying for, as if it mattered but little whether or not our petition was granted, is not praying with confidence and perseverance. Or to pray with what we really feel to be a fervent and earnest spirit, and then to be disappointed because God does not at once, there and then, satisfy our want, is not manifesting perseverance, and therefore shows but little confidence. Or if we feel that we have not even consciously erred here, and that we have again and again besought Almighty God for the same favour with all the earnestness that we can command; and if we, therefore, judge that we have been full of confidence and have persevered, and yet have not succeeded, even this is no argument against the efficacy of prayer, nor ought it to diminish our confidence.

The very fact of making such objections is a proof of faintheartedness. Why are we to judge what God has done, or how He is answering our prayer? Being our Father, He knows what is best for us; and when we in our prayers are pretending to prescribe to Him what is most expedient for us, He who knows how to give the best gifts to His children is designing for us far richer graces. It is quite certain that our prayer is heard; and if we were to venture to ask Almighty God to show us the result, He might answer as our Blessed Lord once answered Peter: *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*[11] Who can tell what sins may have been forgiven us or averted from us, what dangers have been overcome, what an increase of grace has been awarded to us, and what additional security has been attached to our perseverance in grace, in answer to our confiding petitions before the Throne of God?

Do not be surprised, then, but above all things do not be dispirited, if God leaves you sometimes a long time pressing for one favour. He is trying your confidence by your perseverance. If you do not persevere you are not confident, and if you are not confident you are doubting His word, and you do not deserve to be heard by Him. If our Divine Lord tried the ruler in our Gospel of to-day by not at once granting a favour which he had come to beseech, with every evidence of the fullest hope, He did not in the end disappoint him. He gave him more than he asked for; for He granted an immediate cure instead of delaying it, as the ruler had begged, until He could have had time to return with him on his long journey home. Nor did He intend to disappoint His own Mother, when on her first suggesting a want He seemed to evade her request, though He so abundantly afterwards acceded

[11] John xiii. 7.

to it. Certainly the Eternal Father did not intend to leave His own well-beloved Son unheard in the time of His bitter Agony, *who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard for His reverence.*[12]

Urge your petitions with confidence, and persevere in urging them. Remind your God that in praying you are doing what He has bid you do, and that you will not leave Him until He bless you. Appeal to His Truthfulness and His Fidelity to His promises. Tell Him that He has ordered you to call Him Father, that He is *the Father of Mercies, and the God of all comfort.*[13] Conjure Him to look upon the Face of His Anointed One, and to yield to the mediation of Him who has so solemnly proclaimed: *Amen, Amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in My Name He will give it to you.*[14] Then you will not and cannot be disappointed. Your good and merciful God will say to you: *Go, be it done to thee as thou wilt.* Then all will be complete. The law will have been obeyed: the condition fulfilled. Prayer will have been practised, and will have gained its end. And full of gratitude you will go away enriched with the blessings given to those who offer to Heaven a violence which is always sure to carry it away.

[12] Heb. v. 7. [13] 2 Cor. i. 3. [14] John xvi. 23.

SERMON LXV.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

So also shall My Heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.

THESE concluding words convey the moral of the parable in to-day's Gospel, and intimate very clearly what was the intention of our dear Saviour in delivering it. The whole of this day's Gospel does, indeed, contain much to comfort and encourage us, at the same time that it says much to make us very cautious. There is great comfort given to us, because we are assured that there is a means of pardon really at our own disposal, and always within our reach, if we will only accept the condition on which it is offered to us. But great caution is suggested, when we remember that the condition is made so very absolute, that unless it is fulfilled we are neglecting something quite essential for our salvation. The law and the condition is this. Be willing to pardon others, and carry out this will in practice, and you will be forgiven your own sins. But if you do it not, your own pardon will be withheld, your sins will remain upon you, and must appear in evidence against you at your future judgment. So fully, indeed, does the parable describe to us the nature of God's dealings with us, and enforce what ought to be the nature of our dealings with our neighbour, that it cannot fail to bring us a blessing, if we try to master and to apply its teaching.

Year after year, as this parable is read to us by order of the Church, an occasion is afforded to us to attend to the essential and truly Christian duty of the forgiveness of injuries. It is impossible, with such a Gospel placed before us, to avoid the subject, even if we wished to do so, without missing and evading the lesson intended to be impressed. It is a lesson most in accordance with the mind of our dear Lord, very practical; and under the circumstances in which it is brought before us to-day, as an expression of the anxiety of the Church upon a question of

such importance, it is very imperative upon each one of us to attend to the lesson.

I. The first part of the parable reminds us of a truth which is full of consolation: it tells us that God does forgive our sins, and that, upon a craving for pardon, He forgives them so readily. If He did not do so, what, my dear brethren, would ever become of us? If, when we had once incurred the displeasure of our good God, and deserved the punishment which is the consequence of our transgression, He for ever treasured up our offence, and ultimately brought down His Anger upon us, what would be the result? Sinners would have no hope: they would see a gloomy, but a certain irrevocable decree passed in their regard, and their whole life would partake of the sorrow in store for them hereafter.

Everywhere does Almighty God assure us of His readiness to forgive, and to receive the sinner upon his return. It would seem from His pressing invitation to the sinner, and His desire of reconciliation, as if all the benefit were upon His side, when this pardon is given. He says through the Prophet Isaias what cannot fail to encourage and comfort us, if we will only attend to it: *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He is bountiful to forgive.*[1] Through the same Prophet, after commanding the exercise of works of mercy as a disposition for pardon, He had already said: *Come and accuse Me, saith the Lord: if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow: and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool.*[2] In the Prophet Ezechiel He orders the watchman to announce solemnly: *As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live.*[3]

Not in words only, but in so many acts, does our most merciful God show His willingness and His desire to pardon the sinner. The Mystery of our Redemption is a proof of His earnestness in this regard, God so loving the world as being willing to give His only Son that we might not perish, but might have life everlasting.[4] Before this, in His dealings with the Israelites, we find in the Old Testament repeated acts of His Mercy towards those who had sinned against Him. How often did He not through the prayers of Moses forgive that hard-hearted and obstinate people! How readily do we find Him propitiated by cries for pity when He had threatened the total ruin of Ninive through the Prophet Jonas! Look at His conduct towards

[1] Is. lv. 7. [2] Ibid. i. 18. [3] Ezech. xxxiii. 11. [4] John iii. 16.

David, who had sinned, and yet was pardoned and so much loved by God! Over and over again He had spared Jerusalem, and had wished, if that unhappy city had only answered to His wish, to receive it not to forgiveness only, but to cherish it with the tenderest care and love! *How often would I . . . but thou wouldest not.*[5]

And our dearest Lord carries out this conduct in His dealings with sinners. He came, as He tells us, on purpose to call them to repentance. Immediately a sinner presents himself and asks for pardon, it is generously accorded. Magdalene, Peter, Zacheus, the penitent thief, are examples. So constantly did He labour amongst sinners, bringing them to conversion, that He was even taunted with it by the proud and self-satisfied Pharisees. He even instituted a Sacrament on purpose to convey pardon to the soul of the penitent; and He has thus left to His Church the heritage of imitating His zeal and love in behalf of sinners. Thus God does forgive sin.

And yet what is sin? It is an outrage, a rebellion, an act of malice against God. It is a contempt of His Will, and a deliberate act of disobedience against His commandments. It is a standing up against God, and declaring to Him that we will not serve Him, but are handing over our allegiance and our heart to His enemy. And the sinner who dares to do this is so utterly contemptible in comparison with the great God whom he despises and offends. Follow the sinner into eternity, and consider the condition of one who has died in a state of deliberate grievous sin. The eternal punishment of mortal sin shows you how awful is its reality; since a God so good and merciful, because of His Holiness, punishes by a never-ending separation from Himself one who has thus incurred His Anger. This tells us of the awful malice of mortal sin. Indeed, so much do we feel the dreadful evil of such an act of contempt and rebellion, that when we consider the outrage that is offered to Almighty God by public and notorious rebels against Him, we feel indignant, and are astonished that He does not at once avenge His own cause, and hurl His enemies to speedy destruction. Yet how patient and forbearing is He! He waits, and continues to give occasions and invitations for repentance, never wearying, but always calling even upon such unworthy children to return: not wishing their death, but that they should be converted and live.

Thus is the first part of the parable constantly meeting with its fulfilment. Every day and everywhere God is forgiving promptly and generously. What about the second part? Is

[5] Luke xiii. 34.

that fulfilled also? Do we, who are fellow-servants, forgive each other?

II. What is the obligation that is imposed upon us with regard to those who have offended us? Mind, it is not with regard to those whom we have offended; but with regard to those who have offended us. We are the injured party. Do we not think that we are justified then in standing upon our rights, and in demanding full and humble satisfaction before we forgive, and restore our brother to his former position in our estimation? We are oftentimes so slow, and so ungenerous and sparing in our forgiveness. We only partly forgive; and that is not Christian forgiveness, which our Lord tells us must be thorough and from the heart: *So will My Father do to you, unless you forgive from your heart.* You show, perhaps, some faint and formal sign of condescension; and you still keep those whom you consider to have injured you, locked up in the prison of your unkindness, until they have answered every demand of your caprice, and until they offer sacrifice by their humiliation to your sense of pride and self-satisfaction. And what is satisfied then? Is it your charity, or is it not your pride? Such an act on your part is not forgiveness through a Christian feeling: it is a haughty act of condescension through worldly principles. It is but pride: it is not charity.

An obligation is imposed upon us by our Blessed Lord to forgive from our heart our neighbour when he has offended us. We become at that time subjects of a law, and the law commands us to forgive. It is not an advice, a matter of counsel. It is a precept, and we are bound to obey it. Almighty God does not tell us how much happier it will be for us to live in peace with our brethren, by not harbouring displeasure and ill-will against them (though of course it will be so); but He commands us to do it, and establishes this as a condition for our own forgiveness.

Our neighbour offends us by committing an injury against us. What is an injury? It is an act by which our neighbour violates in our regard the law of charity or justice, either by word or by deed. He speaks unkindly or untruly of us, or does some act which wrongs us, and incurs our displeasure. When such a case arises, what is the conduct of the world? Retribution or revenge, and a demanding of full and adequate satisfaction. What ought to be the conduct of a Christian? Forgiveness, and a willingness to keep charity unbroken. You can, therefore, have a test of the spirit by which you are led. If your first and determined feeling, when your neighbour may have said or done that which you interpret as an injury, is to show coolness, to be distant with him,

to demand reparation, and to insist upon your honour, as you call it, being satisfied: what else is that but what the world demands? Do not the heathens as much as this? Where is there any Christian forgiveness here? Certainly, something very different is demanded, or else the text will be verified in your regard, and God will refuse His forgiveness to you.

What is demanded of you is, first, something negative. You are commanded to exclude what worldly principles encourage. You must not treasure up malice: you must not make a resolution to avoid all intercourse with one who has offended you. You must not refuse him ordinary signs of courtesy, or turn away haughtily from his salute, when he offers you this sign of goodwill. You must not refuse to do for him acts of charity, especially when he is in grievous necessity. If he has made himself your enemy, he is still your brother; and St. Paul is not overstraining the duty of charity to such an one when he says, quoting the authority of the wise man: *If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat: if he thirst, give him to drink. . . . Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good.*[6]

And in addition to what you must exclude, as inconsistent with the duty of a Christian, there is something positive which is demanded of you. In your Catechism, in which the Church in the time of your childhood was striving to ground you in principles by which throughout life you were to be influenced, you are taught, in the Rule of Life there drawn out for you, your duty to enemies. 'Are we also to love our enemies?' is the question proposed. And you are told in the answer, 'Yes, we are: not only by forgiving them from our hearts, but also by wishing them well, and praying for them.' Forgiving them from your heart is exactly what our text tells you to-day. A mere, outward, cold, formal look of proud condescension is not forgiveness from the heart. You must wish them well, both with regard to this world and the next; and your petition in the Lord's Prayer, 'deliver us from evil,' must include them, as well as yourself and your friends. For you must pray for them. Our Lord prayed for His. It was His first prayer, when He was agonising on the Cross: and thus He made that Holy Cross to be, not only the Altar on which He offered the Sacrifice for our Redemption, but also the pulpit from which He preached His favourite lesson of Love.

The law of forgiveness is based upon the law of love. God forgives us, because He loves us; and we ought to forgive our neighbour, because we are bound to love him. Unless we do this, we do not comply with the Christian law, of which *Love is*

[6] Rom. xii. 20; Prov. xxv. 21.

the fulfilment.[7] And am I to prove to you the obligation of thus showing your obedience to this law? Look at to-day's parable; and that of itself ought to be sufficient not merely to declare the obligation, but to strike you with fear for every transgression, lest Almighty God should visit you with His displeasure as speedily as you inflict yours upon an offending brother. Think, too, of the teaching of the Lord's Prayer, and if you refuse to forgive, how can you dare to say such a prayer, with its conditional petition for forgiveness of your trespasses? Remember, again, our Lord's admonition and caution against offering our gift at God's altar, whilst there is an absence of reconciliation with any one with whom we may have been at variance. And be not wearied in forgiving, when you remember our Lord's answer to Peter, asking Him: *Lord, how often shall my brother offend me, and I forgive him? Is it to be till seven times? Jesus saith to him: I say not to thee, till seven times, but till seventy times seven times.*[8] And never forget the denunciation of St. James in his practical Epistle: *Judgment without mercy to him who hath not done mercy.*[9]

You say that it is very difficult so far to overcome all feelings of resentment after receiving an injury, as to observe the law which is here enforced. And you may further ask me, whether I am not really somewhat exaggerating the obligation of the law, and the consequences which are said to follow from not observing what is almost beyond the power of poor weak human nature. My dear brethren, I must not deny that to poor weak human nature the law of forgiveness is difficult; but it is so because we allow human nature to overrule us too much, and do not try to bring ourselves more under the influence of Divine Grace. Hard though it may be, it is a law, and we must comply with it. Heaven demands hard things, and we must not expect to carry it away, unless we practise some of that violence towards ourselves which alone succeeds in gaining it. Does not Christian perfection demand something more than heathens and worldlings do? It is pride which makes it so hard to forgive. Aim at conquering that fatal source of so many sins; and when you become more humble, you will also become more meek and less resentful. Our Blessed Lord associates meekness and humility together; so must you, if you pretend to be His followers. And is it nothing for God to pardon you? And when He asks you, for His own sake, to pardon others, are you to hesitate and to refuse, because it is hard to do so? Ten thousand talents, or the largest sum of money you can imagine, is nothing in proportion to what you owe

[7] Rom. xiii. 10. [8] Matt. xviii. 21. [9] James ii. 13.

God: yet He forgives, because you ask Him. And you demur to forgiving a slight affront, because it is hard to do so!

No, my brethren, I am not afraid that I am exaggerating, or exacting too much with regard to the obligation of the law, or describing the consequences of violating it in too strong a light. There is no room for exaggerating, when we take our Blessed Lord's positive and clear declarations. When He says in one place, as you know He does say, that if we are offering our gift at the Altar, and remember that we are at a difference with a brother, we must leave our holy work incomplete, and go at once and be reconciled, we are not misinterpreting or overstraining His words, if we maintain that we are not in a fit state to approach to our duties of Religion, as long as we are harbouring resentment against a neighbour. When, at another time, He tells us to pray that God may deal with us in the matter of forgiveness, in the same manner as we deal with others, we are not misrepresenting or overstraining words which we repeat over and over again, if we maintain that to refuse to forgive our brother is invoking punishment upon ourselves, and begging God not to forgive us. When again He says: *With what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again*,[10] we are not misinterpreting or overstraining His words when we say that there is no other conclusion to be drawn from them but that which we have already cited from St. James, that there is judgment without mercy reserved to those who have not done mercy.

All these words and solemn denunciations against proud unforgiving hearts are confirmatory of to-day's parable; and nothing more of our own need be added to enforce its lesson. There is, therefore, no room for exaggeration. Our Blessed Lord's words are very strong, fearfully so. He demands complete and hearty forgiveness on our part: nothing short of this will satisfy Him, or answer the description which He gives of this duty of charity. Forgive *from your heart*. Do this, and all else will be easy. Pretend anything else; and it is not what He demands.

Do not forget that your enemies, and those who injure you, may do you much more spiritual good than friends who love you, and perhaps flatter you. These may do you harm; because your attachment may be inordinate and proceed from a wrong motive. They may fill your heart, and keep God out of it. But enemies, by being forgiven, must help you on in your spiritual career. Enemy indeed is a word which ought to be blotted out of the Christian's vocabulary. Treat him as a friend. Be especially

[10] Matt. vii. 2.

upon your guard against saying or doing anything in his respect which you may have occasion, after reconciliation, to look back upon with sorrow. Sometimes wounds are inflicted during an interval of misunderstanding which never can be utterly healed. The wound may cease to bleed, but the scar remains for ever. How beautifully does St. Augustine say: Frequently when you think you are hating an enemy, it is a brother you are hating, though you know it not![11]

Pray to your God, who is a God of Mercy, that He will give you a forgiving heart: that He will make you meek and humble like His own Son, and therefore charitable and forgiving as He was. Your future admittance into Heaven so much depends upon this, that, as you hope for Heaven, you must attend to this essential condition for gaining it. I told you at the beginning, as I now remind you at the end, that it is comforting and encouraging to know that we can gain Heaven upon such a condition, inasmuch as it is one within our reach, if we will but fulfil it.

Forgive, then, and Heaven is yours. You will be one after our Lord's own Heart; and you will be following the example of Him of whom St. Peter so truly reminds us: *When He was reviled, He did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not.*[12] At His judgment-seat—for it is He that is to judge you—you will be able to show your claim to Heaven by the fulfilment of a condition which He Himself, your Judge, will have established. St. Augustine, in praying for his mother, Monica, after her death, thus appealed for mercy for her soul: 'She forgave others, do Thou, O God, forgive her!' If Saints and the Church upon earth can thus pray for you, the prayers will be heard, and you must be saved. Sins may be brought up, and the shortcomings of your life alleged in evidence against you; but your answer will be: I forgave others from my heart. Then you will have a right to claim forgiveness, and it will not be refused you. Then with sins blotted out by God's Mercy, you will stand with confidence and expect your reward from a faithful and loving God, who cannot refuse Heaven to a forgiving, and therefore a forgiven soul.

[11] Aug. in Ps. liv. [12] 1 Pet. ii. 21.

SERMON LXVI.

ALL SAINTS.

I saw a great multitude which no man could number . . . standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb.

What a noble and glorious vision was that which was vouchsafed to the beloved Disciple, St. John, when the whole court of Heaven passed in review before him, as he was praying in that solitary island, where he was undergoing the punishment of exile for the sake of the faith! He saw the countless numbers whom the earth was to send up into Heaven: not Angels only, but the spirits of the just made perfect, those who had upon earth done the Will of God, and by many tribulations had gained admission into the Kingdom of Heaven. He saw the Saints of the Old Law, the hundred and forty-four thousand of the twelve tribes of Israel, whose spirits had already from the day of the Ascension entered upon the possession of their reward. And when these had passed away, he saw another sight, and this was quite prophetical. The nations of the earth had scarcely yet begun to be aggregated to the Church, and it was only in the future that they were to send up that *great multitude which no man could number of all tribes, and peoples, and tongues.* The College of Apostles had not at that time contributed its full complement to Heaven, for he who saw and recorded the vision was as yet going on in his course: the white-robed army of Martyrs, whom the first three centuries were to be so prolific in recruiting, was only just commencing to be organised: hermits and holy virgins were not as yet formed into recognised institutions; these had still their victories to achieve, and their crowns to gain. He saw Heaven as it was to be: as it now is more perfectly, and even as it still is to be. But he saw it as the Church sees it, and shows it to us to-day: the last home of God's faithful servants, the conquest of perseverance a grace, the recompense of fidelity, and the reality to which each and all of us may look forward with a hope which no danger and no fear can dispel.

That cheering vision of the Evangelist is held before us to-

day ; and if we raise up our thoughts, we shall be able to see it with a clearness and to understand it with a certainty equal to, and in one way even greater than, that of the Apostle. To him it was vouchsafed in an exceptional manner, and granted as a privilege : to us it is manifested as an accomplished fact, and it is presented before us as an object of faith, which, not the mysteriousness or privilege of a vision, but which authority and law impose upon us as an obligation to accept. For the actual happiness of the Saints in Heaven, their possession now, at this present moment, of the Beatific Vision, and the future glory of all who are to be crowned after the Resurrection of the Flesh, are articles of our belief, no less than incentives to our hope. How encouraged must not St. John have been, when in the vision which was vouchsafed to him he felt that he was witnessing a reality in which he was so soon to bear a part ! For he knew that he was shortly to be admitted to a share in the glory of the Saints, and was to join with them in singing the glories of the Lamb. So are we to cheer ourselves on in the career that is before us, and on this noble solemnity to be celebrating that glory which, if we are only true to our duty, is speedily to be revealed in us also. It really only depends upon ourselves that this Festival should be our own Festival, and that we should be celebrating our own future happiness.

Let us, then, for our encouragement consider in how many ways this solemnity of All Saints affects ourselves, and how it unites us so closely and so really with what upon many titles we can claim as our own.

I. The happiness and glory of the Saints is our own. It is now theirs in actual possession : it is ours by right and in anticipation. Heaven is our home as well as theirs. We are made for it as well as they were. It was theirs before they actually took possession of it, and had been prepared for them even from the foundation of the world. For such has been the sentence which they have heard once, and are to hear again : *Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*[1] And, therefore, our Blessed Lord said, as we see in the Gospel of this glorious Festival, to those who fulfilled the conditions upon which they were to be ultimately crowned, that the reward was already theirs: *Blessed are the poor in spirit. . . . Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs* IS *the kingdom of Heaven :* not *will be,* as of the future, but *is,* as of the present. For, as when we purchase a thing, it becomes ours as soon as we have agreed

[1] Matt. xxv. 34.

to take it, and have paid for it, although we have not yet taken it home with us, so when we purchase the kingdom of Heaven by our fidelity, we are fitting subjects for it, and it already becomes our own by virtue of the promise which our good God has made in favour of us.

God has created us for Heaven, and has fixed a place for us in that happy and glorious kingdom. We are made to know and to love and to serve God, and to be happy with Him for ever hereafter. And as surely as we fulfil those duties here below, upon which our future depends, that future is ours, and is reserved for us by Him whom we have trusted, and who is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him until that day,[2] when He will render to each one accordingly as he has deserved. And not by creation only does Heaven belong to us, but by the Great Price which has been paid for its purchase by Him who hath redeemed us, and hath made us, as St. Peter says, *a chosen generation, . . . a purchased people,* or as it is more literally called *a people of acquisition:*[3] a people who have acquired Heaven as their inheritance, of which they cannot be deprived, except through their own deliberate act of confiscation.

When the Psalmist in his beautiful panegyric in the 118th Psalm, of those who are walking unspotted in the observance of God's commandments, is urging himself to imitate the example of those whom he is praising, he alludes to the reward in store for him as an incentive to do what they did, and says: *I have inclined my heart to do Thy justifications for ever, because of the reward.*[4] It is to-day's solemnity which reminds us of this reward, destined for us as well as for those who are now in its possession. They looked forward to it during the time of their probation, and it was the prospect of that great weight of glory in store for them which urged them on to be faithful, and which has now secured their entrance into the home, towards which we are journeying forward.

Sursum corda! then. Lift up your hearts, and contemplate what is prepared for you, and what is already actually existing in that glorious kingdom, in which with Christ all the Saints are rejoicing. To be admitted into that home of eternal joy: to see the brilliant Angels surrounding the Throne of God: to hear their songs of praise, and to join in them: to see the glorious Apostles on their seats, in readiness to judge the twelve tribes of Israel: to witness the white-robed army of Martyrs, the laborious Confessors in rest after their toil, the spotless Virgins following the Lamb

[2] 2 Tim. i. 12.
[3] *Populus acquisitionis:* 1 Pet. ii. 9.
[4] Ps. cxviii. 112.

whithersoever He goeth: to see our own patron Saints, who with our Angel-Guardian had especially interested themselves in our behalf: to look upon the face and the merciful eyes of the Mother of Mercy, the Refuge of Sinners, and the Help of Christians, who had by her powerful intercession gained for us graces untold and unknown during life, but now rewarded by so great happiness and glory: to be able to say: Here at last I have arrived at my true and lasting Home, Heaven is now mine, and for ever:—this is all possible, and the Saints now in that kingdom remind us that it can be actual also, if we will only be true to our own dearest interests.

But more than all that: to see God Himself, to be satiated when His Glory appears: to see Him face to face: to contemplate all His infinite Perfections: to see and understand, as far as the clearest created intellect can understand, the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity; and to know that this God of Love loves me, rejoices at my presence before Him, and that He Himself welcomes and rewards me: and to see this, not in a passing vision and for a short time, as St. Paul and St. John saw it in a dark mysterious manner, but to live in the midst of such an ocean of happiness, and to know that is to be mine for all eternity!—this is what I am reminded of to-day, when Heaven seems to come so close within reach, and in some manner to be already in our possession.

For the encouraging doctrine of the Communion of Saints implies that we participate in the joy of all those who have gone before us to their reward. They are our brethren, and we are therefore intimately concerned in what has fallen to their happy lot, and with them we feel to be enjoying some portion of their glory. It is our own human nature which in them is exalted and crowned. And as by nature we are moved to sympathise with those who suffer, because it is our own nature which is affected, and as by faith we are taught, as we shall be proving in the solemn commemoration of to-morrow, to feel for and to interest ourselves about those of our brethren, who are detained for a time after death in a state of suffering and of deferred hope, so both by nature and by faith we are excited to-day to think of a glory which is our own by inheritance, and which our fellow-labourers and brothers already claim as their own in reality. St. Paul tells us that it is our duty to *give thanks to God the Father, who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the Saints in light*;[5] and he encourages us by reminding us that we have already, by being members of the Church Militant, *come to Mount*

[5] Col. i. 12.

Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the spirits of the just made perfect.[6]

II. The example of the Saints is also ours: it is for us an encouragement and a great incentive. The duty of setting good example is incumbent upon all of us by virtue of the law of charity. In this regard we are all our brothers' keepers, and as St. Paul tells us, we must *consider one another to provoke unto charity and to good works.*[7] This is what the Saints have done, and what they are now doing. For what is a Saint? He is one who has done his duty, and is now being rewarded for his fidelity: one who, when upon earth, practised those Beatitudes which are enumerated in the Gospel of this solemnity, and is now reaping the recompense which is attached to each. But these Beatitudes are within our reach also: they are held before us as a duty and as an encouragement, and the Saints remind us that what they succeeded in doing with regard to them, we can do also, if we will only be in earnest as they were.

A Saint is one who kept the Commandments, and who now enjoys the result of his obedience. But assuredly we are not exempt from the obligation of these laws of God, nor, thanks be to God! are we excluded from the happiness to which they are sure to lead, if we comply with them. They are not burdens beyond our strength, nor are they grievous to a willing soul. Our good God when He first imposed them announced to each one of His children, that there was nothing in them out of the reach of an obedient mind: that we were not required to travel beyond the sea, nor to mount up to Heaven in order to bring them home to us for fulfilment, but that they were close to us, and even within our very heart.[8] The helps which were given to the Saints, especially through prayer and the Sacraments, are equally accessible to us; for Almighty God is certainly not demanding of us anything more than He required of those whose glory we are to-day contemplating, nor does He refuse to us what He was so generous in granting to them. Our end is the same as theirs: our means are the same, and therefore we must urge ourselves to adopt the means in order to secure that end.

Do we think that it is so hard to save our souls, and to gain Heaven? The recollection of what the Saints have done diminishes the difficulty, inasmuch as it places before our mind an illustration which gives us a clearer view of what otherwise might seem less practicable; just as those who are teaching young persons always find that rules which are hard to understand when

[6] Heb. xii. 22. [7] Ibid. x. 24. [8] Deut. xxx. 11-14.

expressed merely in words become quite easy when illustrated by an example. Salvation is not harder to us than it was to those of whom, as we read their lives, we can scarcely help feeling that Almighty God was demanding even more than He is asking of us. What heroes do we not find in the catalogue of the Saints! What sacrifices were not demanded, and generously made, in the case of Apostles, Martyrs, Hermits, Virgins, and Confessors! What St. Paul says in the noble eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews of the Patriarchs and Martyrs of the Old Law, is what we feel of the Saints of the Church as we read their various acts: *They had trials of mockeries and stripes, of bands and prisons: they were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheep-skins, in goat-skins, being in want, distressed, afflicted: of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts, in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth.*[9]

In the striking and touching history which St. Augustine gives us in his Confessions of his own conversion, he tells us how at the time of the violent struggle which was taking place in his soul between passion and duty, he thought of the example of the Saints, and asked himself the question: Cannot you do what these have done? and he urged himself on with that thought to break through the chains of vicious habits which until then had been tyrannising over him. So with St. Ignatius Loyola, the consideration of the example of the Saints whose lives he was led by accident to read and study had such influence that he exclaimed: These men were of the same frame as myself: why then should I not do what they have done? Such was his question: the history of the Church tells us what has been the happy result of the answer. What St. Paul says of our Blessed Lord, that He became so much like one of ourselves, humble, obedient, tempted, suffering, encompassed with infirmity, in order that He might be able to use the argument of His example, we may rightly apply to the Saints. They had their share of human weakness, but the Grace of God enabled them to triumph over every obstacle, and power was made perfect in infirmity.

Many of those whose names are illustrious in the annals of the Church had been at one time sinners, giving but little prospect of future heroism in sanctity. But the same power which changed St. Paul from a persecutor into an Apostle transformed them into what they afterwards became, and what the Church holds before us as an encouragement to ourselves. Think of St. Mary Magdalene, St. Augustine, St. Camillus, St. Thais, St.

[9] Heb. xi. 36-38.

Margaret of Cortona, and of many other holy penitents, whose previous sinfulness is not concealed, though the bright lustre of their later sanctity throws it into obscurity. If we fear, with too much reason, perhaps, that we are now what they had been before they yielded to the influence of Divine Grace, we must hope that the same Grace, which is really within our reach, if we will but accept it, may make penitents of us also, and enable us by later fervour to atone for earlier forgetfulness.

The glorious Saints of the Church are an example to us by what they are now, even as by what they were when upon earth. When we pray to God that His Will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven, we are praying for Grace to do what the Saints are now doing in their everlasting happy home. In all things they do the Will of God: they never sin against Him: they live in His Presence: they keep their thoughts fixed upon Him: they are bound together by a bond of love which nothing weakens: and they persevere in their duty. What a contrast between their union with God, and our too great tendency to be attached to creatures! They are now confirmed in a state into which they had entered before death: and so must we remember that habits which are to be continued throughout eternity, and in the exercise of which the happiness of Heaven consists, must be commenced during these days of our trial, in order that they may be continued in the days of our reward.

III. There is one more reality which belongs to us in connexion with the Saints whose glory we are this day commemorating. Their intercession is ours. It is for us, their own brethren, that they are constantly praying before the Throne of God. That which is to them a Throne of Glory is to us a Throne of Grace. They have an office to exercise in our behalf, to which they are moved by the law of brotherly love which they never fail in fulfilling. Charity in both its branches is faithfully and perpetually observed. The Saints for ever are loving God; but they are also loving each other and loving their brethren upon earth. No longer solicitous about themselves in their home of peace, as St. Cyprian reminds us,[10] they are solicitous for us, who are still engaged in a conflict from which they are delivered. St. John, in his vision of the worship of Heaven, saw those who were before the Throne of the Lamb offering up the prayers of the saints.[11] For themselves they have nothing to pray for, and it is for others in their state of trial that they are interested in the work of prayer.

The accidental glory of the Saints is increased by the con-

[10] Cypr. de Immortalitate: in fine. [11] Rev. v. 8, viii. 3, 4.

version which they gain in their prayers for us who are still wayfarers towards Heaven, just as the accidental Glory of God Himself is increased by our fidelity and purity of intention in our actions, when we do them 'for the greater Glory of God.' As the Angels receive an additional joy when a sinner is converted, for so our Blessed Lord assures us, when He tells us that *there shall be joy before the Angels of God upon one sinner doing penance*,[12] so the Saints, who are mixed up with the Angels in their various hierarchies, and are like the Angels of God,[13] rejoice also in what concerns our spiritual good, and can, therefore, be well considered as interesting themselves in what thus indirectly affects them.

And if what St. James declares is true, that it is *the continual prayer of the just man* especially, which *availeth much* with God,[14] what efficacy must not be attached to the prayers of the just made perfect, which are continually being offered to the God of Mercy? How feeble and distracted are our poor prayers, and how much both in their intention and their exercise are they affected by mere natural and human influences and inordinate attachments! Even in the presence of the Adorable Sacrament, when there is so great a Reality close before us, which ought to attract every power of our soul, and be the one object of every aspiration of our heart, even then how tepid do we not oftentimes feel, and how easily do we allow ourselves to wander away in thought from the treasure on which our whole affections ought to be fixed. Not so is it with the prayers of the Saints. They are rejoicing in the sight of God, and are abounding with the delights which His Presence supplies and secures. Their love and their thoughts are centred upon Him, and fervour never can be wanting in their prayers.

The Communion of Saints, a doctrine so encouraging to us, is therefore a reality to them, and is carried out by them in our regard. Not the first branch of charity alone, Love for God, is practised by them, but the second also, Love for their brethren. And this branch of charity is exercised by them in what they receive from us, and in what they give to us. They receive our praise and congratulations; for it is our duty to praise those men of renown who were our fathers in their generation. They receive our petitions, and in return they give us the benefit of their sympathy, gain for us from our one common God what He grants in answer to their intervention, and then again receive our thanks. Thus is our intercourse continually kept up; and the Saints reigning with God in Heaven are honoured and invocated by us; they offer prayers for us, and are helping us towards a happy completion of our pilgrimage.

[12] Luke xv. 10. [13] Matt. xxii. 30. [14] James v. 16.

Is not this Festival, then, for us a day of Hope—a day which raises us up towards Heaven, and joins us to the company of the just made perfect? They who are now in the triumphant state were once precisely what we are now, and helped themselves on by the prayers of those that had gone before them. Now they are doing for us what others had done for them, and are stretching out their hands towards us to meet ours, as we hold out ours for their assistance. They are our brethren, and they love us on that account. By happy experience they know that salvation is attainable; for they have attained it, and they are urging us on, not to despond, but to walk forward full of hope and courage. Life will soon be over, with all its trials, anxieties, and uncertainties; but Heaven is for ever. What matters it that we have to suffer, when suffering results in endless joy! What matters it that we are called upon to perform acts of self-denial, when these acts will prove to have been the purchase-money of many degrees of glory! O happy penance! is St. Peter of Alcantara recorded to have said to St. Teresa, after his death, in a vision to her,—O happy penance! which hath obtained for me so great a reward!

Let us all to-day, my dear brethren, make the resolution that we will try ever to live worthy of our union with the Saints. Remember, that when you are in a state of grace you are in a state of sanctity, and are even then numbered by God amongst His own favourite children. At such a time Heaven *is* yours, and your place is there ready for you. It is to encourage you to persevere in that happy state that you are now reminded of the glory, the example, and the intercession of the Saints. Take all these three and make them your own, as you have a right to do, for they are yours. May the two last lead to the first, that by the example and intercession of the Saints we may enter one day into our glory. *Ours*, because it is made for us, and we for it. *Ours*, because it is already in store for us. And *ours*, because by the blessing of God we are determined now to take the steps which will one day lead us to its secure possession.

SERMON LXVII.

ALL SOULS.

It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins. 2 Mach. xii. 46.

THE holy and wholesome thought upon which the good Judas Maccabeus acted, when he ordered sacrifices and prayers to be offered up for the souls of his deceased brethren, is never absent from the mind of the Church. She always holds in affectionate and charitable remembrance those of her children who have passed away; and the thought of praying for them, and of offering up the Holy Sacrifice for their repose, is ever close to her heart. You know, my dear brethren, how true this is, and how constantly and faithfully is practised now what St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in the fourth century, says was practised then, that in the Sacrifice of the Mass we always 'commemorate all who in past years have fallen asleep among us, believing that it will be a very great advantage to the souls for whom the supplication is put up, while that holy and most awful Sacrifice is presented.'[1] Every time, therefore, and in every place, where the Holy Mass is offered up, as will be the case with us to-day, just after the consecration of the sacred elements, the Church calls upon Almighty God to remember those 'who have gone before us with the sign of faith, and are resting in the sleep of peace.' In the Liturgical offices of the Church, in your own private daily prayers, even in your grace at meals, the same affectionate mother suggests to you the frequent use of the familiar supplication: 'May the souls of the faithful, through the mercy of God, rest in peace!' Thus it is the case that the holy and wholesome thought of praying for the dead is never forgotten by the Church.

But it is in this month of November that she is appealing with unusual earnestness to our charity and our devotion in behalf of this, the most pressing call which ever can be made to us for pity and relief. The leading object which is now brought before us, not for piety merely, but for practical charity and active compassion, are the suffering souls in Purgatory. She has commenced the month by placing before us the glory of the Saints, who have been already admitted to their reward; and she then passes eagerly

[1] St. Cyril, Oxford translation, p. 275.

and suddenly to a solemn commemoration of those other Saints, those 'holy souls,' as we love to call them, who are one day to be undoubtedly associated to the Church Triumphant, but who are still in their transitory state of separation and suffering. She bids us think of them; she calls upon us to exercise practically in their behalf our belief in the Communion of Saints, and to turn to our common God, the *Father of mercies and the God of all comfort*, and to beg of Him with earnest and confident prayer that He will vouchsafe to show pity and give instant relief to those suffering souls, His own creatures, redeemed with the precious Blood of His only Son, temples of the Holy Ghost, because they are in a state of grace, and give them a place of rest, of light, and of peace.

In conformity with this spirit of the Church, in sympathy with your own charitable and affectionate feelings, which I know I am anticipating, and as an advocate on the part of the most suffering of God's creatures, I will urge upon you this holy and wholesome thought of praying for the holy souls in Purgatory. God's interests and those of the Church are at stake in their persons; therefore it is a holy thought. Your own spiritual benefit is also concerned; therefore it is a wholesome thought.

I. It is a *holy* thought to pray for the dead; for it is an act of charity very acceptable to God, and very profitable to our suffering brethren; and acts of charity are holy acts. Almighty God loves those suffering souls, for they have died in His grace and friendship. He wishes them to be admitted to His presence and to the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision which is certainly reserved for them; but He wishes it only in conformity with His justice and His sanctity. Nothing defiled can stand before Him in Heaven; and He keeps these holy souls at a distance from Him for a time until every stain be removed, and they be fitted to enter into the possession of their joy. Prayer, which always has the power of propitiating Him, has great influence over Him in regard to these afflicted souls; and He who has instituted the law of prayer, and commands us to pray for one another, in proof of our mutual charity and sympathy, wishes us to exercise our power over His mercy in their regard. He is willing and ready to hear us; and it is therefore holy for us to be conforming ourselves to His will, and to be interesting ourselves in behalf of souls so dear to Him.

And it is a holy thought also, because we are herein entering into the spirit of the Church, who still claims these suffering souls as her own children, and who is ever expressing her solicitude in their regard. The solemn commemoration which we are now observing, immediately after the glorious Festival of All Saints, is

an evidence to us of the sympathy of the Church in their regard. On these two days which she has associated together in her calendar, she is inviting us to live in the next world, and to contemplate the state in which she exists there. Yesterday she was full of joy and triumph, and bade us share her feelings, in considering the abundant reward already bestowed by so good and glorious a God, upon her children who had fulfilled the condition for which they had been created, and had succeeded in realising their end. To-day she is full of sympathy: it is not sadness which oppresses her. She mourns, indeed, but not like those who have no hope. In looking upon these suffering members of her own, and asking us to join in considering their afflicted state, she knows, and she reminds us, that they are on their way to Heaven, and that each one of them has already heard its favourable sentence to be admitted into the joy of its Lord; and therefore the confidence with which she is filled in their regard cheers her in the contemplation of their sufferings.

For let me remind you what the Church teaches, and what you must therefore believe, and try to realise as feelingly as you can, in regard to the holy suffering souls in Purgatory. Faith tells us that there is a state of souls who after death are detained for a time from admittance into Heaven, owing to the presence of the stain left upon them by lesser sins, or by greater ones which had been forgiven as to their guilt, but had not before death been fully effaced by those means through which, in this life, Almighty God purifies the souls of the elect. This place of detention is called Purgatory, from the fact of the purifying process, whatever it may be, to which the God of Justice, Mercy, and Holiness there subjects those of His children, from whom in the next world He is removing every defilement. The Church usually represents them before us as being in a state of great suffering; and therefore, in her beautiful Office for the Dead, she puts upon their lips the exclamations of the holy patriarch Job, the great model of patience under severe affliction. With regard to the intensity of the sufferings of Purgatory, I need say nothing, for it is better to appeal to your faith than to your imagination; but yet we can believe that the sufferings are very intense.

The hand of God is upon these souls, as it was upon Job; and the fact of separation from the God for whose possession they are craving so eagerly—this deferred hope which afflicteth the soul[2]—is to them the great cause of their pain. As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so do these holy souls long after their God, the one Object of their love. And we can imagine we now

[2] Prov. xiii. 12.

hear them calling upon us for sympathy, and for the powerful help of our prayers, and to put into practice the holy thought of relieving them. *Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, for the Hand of the Lord hath touched me!* Help me! says the most desolate soul. No one thinks of me; others have friends who are interested in their behalf. I am forgotten by all. Help me! says the most suffering soul. I am a victim of God's justice, deservedly so; His holy will be done! but pray that the chalice of affliction may quickly pass, and that I may be freed from the severe pain which I have so justly merited. Be to me what the Angel of comfort was to our agonising Saviour, and bring me relief by your prayers. Help me! says the soul nearest to its deliverance. I have heard the voice, This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise. Only one more Mass or fervent prayer, and I shall be at rest. Help me! says the soul which upon earth was most devout to the Blessed Sacrament. I am longing to look upon the Face of Him, whom I loved so well when I possessed Him in the Mystery of Love; and whom I love still so ardently, though torn away from Him by my own fault. Soon I shall be gaining the reward of all the holy Communions I made, the Masses I assisted at, and the visits I used so much to value to Him whom my soul longed after. Pray for me in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and I shall speedily be allowed to cling to my God, and never to be separated from Him. Thus do the holy souls cry out in their anguish for our sympathy and prayers.

We are to these suffering victims what the Saints and Angels are to us. We can help them, as we are helped. And many means are at our disposal which it is in our power to apply in their behalf. By prayers, and by gaining indulgences applicable to them, by assisting at Mass, and interesting ourselves in having Masses offered up for their repose, by holy Communions, and by alms-deeds and other works of mercy, we can be exercising the holy thought of relieving such acute suffering. Through our mediation, the Precious Blood will be more copiously poured upon them, and the time of their sojourning will be abridged. In their behalf, also, we can invoke the powerful advocacy of the ever-blessed Mother of God, and can beg of her to turn towards them those merciful eyes which we so often ask her to turn upon ourselves. For although she and all the Saints in glory with her do interest themselves about their suffering brethren in their temporary abode of separation, yet it is in accordance with the order established by God, that we should invoke this aid, as it is through the Church upon earth that help is to be gained from Heaven for the relief of the holy souls in Purgatory.

Do you believe this, my dear brethren, and yet can you allow yourselves to be without solicitude in regard to so pressing a call for your sympathy? Amongst those that are here present, some certainly, perhaps all, have friends in that bitter state of suffering. Indeed, they are all our friends; for they are our brothers in the faith. What would you not do for a friend whom you saw suffering upon earth from some severe cause of pain! You know how a mother watches over a dying child, how she feels every pain which afflicts the object of her love and anxiety. Literally the sword of sorrow pierces her own soul, and she suffers inwardly every feeling of bodily pain in her child. Yet must it be that because these souls are out of sight they are to be out of mind, and are to be unheeded by us, notwithstanding their earnest cries for our assistance?

O, my dear brethren, when you are told that it is a holy thought to pray for the dead, has it ever occurred to you to remember how it is especially the Holiness of the God of infinite Purity that requires the separation from Him for a time of souls, holy as they are, in whom is to be found the slightest stain of sin? In His kingdom nothing defiled is to be found; and if after death, when He who judges justices will examine whether each soul that appears before Him is fit for admittance into Heaven, He discovers in any one the least stain, though He pronounces upon it the blessing of being one day received into that Home of perfect happiness, He allows to that soul what it wishes itself, that that stain should be utterly effaced before it is admitted to the full enjoyment of its glory. Imagine a soul in Heaven with the least stain upon it. Such a stain would remain upon it for ever; for in Heaven there is no alteration. And throughout eternity there would be a something which would stand between that soul and the perfect possession of its God. It would be upon the soul in some way like the mark upon Cain. It would be a perpetual record of slighted love, of infidelity to grace, of forgetfulness and disobedience—in a small matter, it may be; but eternity would attach a kind of infinite importance to it. Such a soul would beg of God, as the daughter of Jephte begged of her father, that it might go away for a time and deplore the presence of such an obstacle to a pure and unsullied view of God in the Beatific Vision. Its petition would at once be granted. The stain would be its suffering: the temporary separation its Purgatory. And thus when we think of the infinite Holiness of God, we see how His Mercy and Justice are combined in the purification of the holy souls of the faithful departed.

II. To pray for the dead is also a *wholesome* thought, on

account of the great advantage which it brings to ourselves. Charity's double blessing is realised here: a blessing to those who receive, and to those who give. For the Church would have us remember that as every act of charity and mercy has its reward, so does such an act as brings relief to the dear friends and children of God, gain a blessing from the God of mercy and of love. See, also, what virtues you are exercising when you are pleading in behalf of these holy sufferers.

You are calling into practice your faith, and are realising the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. For your faith tells you that you still hold communion and intercourse with the blessed dead, not only with those already admitted to their reward in the Church Triumphant, but with those who are detained for a time in the Church Suffering. They are still your brethren, members of the same Church, though in a different state, but still journeying on towards your one common Home in Heaven, where you all hope one day to arrive: towards which you are travelling on in the midst of the tribulations of this life, whilst they are being drawn towards it through the sufferings of the next. Of both states is true what St. Paul used to remind his disciples: *that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.*[3]

You are also exercising the virtue of hope, which always finds its expression in prayer. You are bidden not to mourn for the dead as they who have no hope;[4] and they who pray not for the dead are indeed sad and hopeless mourners. There is a double fault committed against hope by those who do not follow the practice and advice of the Church in praying for the dead. There is the fault of presumption upon the part of those, who pronounce positively upon the souls of their friends being at once admitted to a state of everlasting peace. And there is a fault equivalent to despair upon the part of those, who abandon the souls of their brethren, as if beyond the sphere in which they may be prayed for. St. Augustine in his sermon upon those words of the Apostle, bidding us not to mourn without hope[5] for the dead, says that it is against nature not to feel sorrow at the death of those who during life were dear to us. But we are to find our comfort and to express our hope in their regard by means of the prayers, sacrifices, and alms-deeds which we apply for their benefit. For it is the observance of the universal Church, he adds, that prayers and commemoration are made during the time of the holy Sacrifice for those who have died in the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ.

[3] Acts xiv. 21. [4] 1 Thess. iv. 12.
[5] Serm. xxxii. de Verbis Ap. (Serm. clxxii. ed. Gaume).

Most effectually also do we exercise the virtue of charity, not only in their regard, as we have already seen, when we declared this to be a holy practice, but charity in our own behalf also. For as Almighty God is the God of Charity, and is Charity itself, as St. John tells us,[6] He never leaves unrewarded an act of a virtue so dear to Him. A cup of cold water, given in the spirit of brotherly love, is remembered and rewarded. And when it is in behalf of His own suffering children, of those who are in His grace and friendship, and will certainly be one day in His presence for eternity, that our charity is exercised, we cannot doubt that He accepts as done to Himself what we do in regard of these His little ones.

Imagine also a soul, in whose behalf you have been assiduous in your offerings of relief, at last having completed the time of its separation, which you have been a means of abridging, entering into the glorious halls of Heaven, full of jubilation at seeing its God and possessing Him for ever, with every stain and imperfection utterly effaced by the most Precious Blood applied in the prison of Purgatory through the suffrages of the faithful, of whom you have been one of the most zealous,—imagine such a soul, and ask yourself whether it can be ungrateful to its benefactors and unmindful of their wants. Unlike the fellow-prisoner of the Patriarch Joseph, to whom when he was being liberated Joseph addressed himself: *Only remember me, when it shall be well with thee, and do me this kindness: to put Pharaoh in mind to take me out of the prison*:[7] but who, when things prospered with him, forgot his friend, the holy soul now freed, and in the presence of the God of Love and Mercy, will pray for those who assisted it in the time of its distress, and you will not be forgotten. Thus your charity will meet with a return.

Nay, even before the happy consummation of their time of separation, even now in the days of their imprisonment, the holy souls in Purgatory can and do pray for their brethren upon earth. They are still in communion with the Church, and the law which says *Pray for one another*[8] is faithfully fulfilled by them in our behalf. The holy Doctor of the Church, St. Alphonso Liguori, strongly advocates the opinion of those who attribute efficacy to the prayers of those saintly sufferers, and states that God communicates our wishes to them, and they being full of charity will not neglect to present our supplications before the throne of God. He cites the authority of St. Catherine of Bologna, who, when she stood in need of any particular grace, used to invoke the aid of the souls in Purgatory, and who de-

[6] Deus charitas est, 1 John iv. 16. [7] Gen. xl. 14. [8] James v. 16.

clared that through these holy souls many favours had been granted to her, which she had not been able to obtain even through the intercession of the Saints in Heaven.[9]

And whilst you have in your mind the holy and wholesome thought of praying for the dead, let me beg of you to look forward to your own future, and to anticipate now your own probable Purgatory. Are you ever to be in that suffering but blessed state? blessed, though suffering, for it is the abode of future citizens of Heaven. Can you expect that your sanctity at the time of your death will be so great, your freedom from the stains of sin so complete, as that you will be able to claim at once, immediately after death, your admittance into Heaven? God grant it may be so! But God grant that you may even be found worthy of being numbered amongst those holy sufferers, who die in His Grace, although deserving of some temporary separation! What a holy life must you not lead to merit the immediate admittance into Heaven! and what a holy life is to be the prelude of your ultimate entrance into that Home of eternal happiness, even though you may have to undergo a temporary painful separation!

Let me now, in conclusion, ask you a practical question. How many of you will refuse, during this month of November, consecrated by the pious observance of the Church in honour and remembrance of the holy souls in Purgatory, to offer one holy Communion, or to interest yourselves in securing one Mass in behalf of these sufferers? I ask it in their name, and they ask it for their own sake and for yours. They promise to remember you in return; and, good and faithful as they are, they will keep their promise, and will think of you when they are admitted to their reward. The holy thought of praying for them, when realised by you, will become a wholesome thought also. What St. Augustine has laid down as a principle will be carried out for your blessing; and you will find out for the benefit of your soul, that those who have been most charitable in praying for these holy prisoners will be the most prayed for, when the time may come that you will stand in need of the suffrages which the Church upon earth and in Heaven will be constantly offering up, that the souls of the faithful may through the mercy of God rest in peace!

[9] St. Alphonso, *Treatise on Prayer*, c. i.

SERMON LXVIII.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE GIFT OF FINAL PERSEVERANCE.

We are confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ.

THE blessing which the holy Apostle, in his love for the Philippians, declared that he felt confident Almighty God would bestow upon them, is of all blessings the most important, and one that is always most earnestly to be prayed for. It is the blessing of Final Perseverance. Upon that gift everything depends: our state in eternity is decided, not by the fact of our being in the Grace of God now, but by what will be the case at the end of our career. If we are in God's Grace and friendship now, but have the misfortune to fall away, our present justice will not save us. But if we are found at the moment of death, as God grant we may be! in His favour, all will then be for our peace, and our lot will be decided to be with the Saints. The Apostle expressed a holy confidence that such would be the case with those favourite converts of his, to whom the words of this day's Epistle are addressed. The Philippians had shown especial marks of love to St. Paul, and he invoked upon them in return the richest of all blessings. He was in prison in Rome, and these affectionate children of his sent to him their Bishop Epaphroditus with offerings for his comfort. He sends back to them his beautiful Epistle in which he assures them of his affection and of his prayers. He calls them his joy and his crown, and begs them to stand fast and persevere. This he says he feels confident will be granted to them by that good God, who would continue till the end the good work He had begun in them. There were indeed great obstacles in the way of the perseverance of Christians in those days of cruel persecution. He was teaching them by his own example, whilst writing to them from within the walls of his prison, and he begs that they may have strength to endure even to the end, as he was determined himself to do through the help of Him who was strengthening him. Perseverance has other obstacles nowadays, and obstacles

which will be fatal unless they are carefully guarded against, but which have been conquered and can be conquered by a good will under the influence of God's Grace.

Let us study the lesson of perseverance, in order that we may know and practise a duty on which everything most valuable, even the salvation of our soul, depends.

I. What is meant by perseverance in grace, is continuing in that state, when once it has been obtained, and especially being found in that happy state at the time of death. This particularly is final perseverance. The Church is careful to remind us that this is a grace which we cannot merit for ourselves. We must depend upon God alone to grant it to us, and we must have the fullest confidence that, as He refuses not His Grace to those who are faithful and constant in praying for it, He will not refuse us this greatest of all His favours. And therefore we may share St. Paul's confidence, that He who hath begun the good work of our salvation by calling us to the Faith, and making us partakers of the Sacraments, will continue to bless us, and in answer to our unceasing prayers will perfect that work unto the end.

Although the Sacred Scriptures abound with assurances that God is faithful and abundant in His blessings towards those who have confidence in Him, yet they do not fail to caution us against calculating too securely upon our persevering to the end. St. Paul, who inspires so much confidence in those words which we are now considering, does not hesitate when expedient, to inculcate the necessity of that caution which prevents us from presuming too much upon our merits. *He that thinketh himself to stand*, he says, *let him take heed lest he fall*.[1] And to the same Philippians, to whom he addresses his encouraging words, he says: *With fear and trembling work out your salvation*.[2] And of himself, though he declares his determination to allow nothing to make him swerve from his duty, and nobly defies persecution of any kind to separate him from his allegiance to Jesus Christ, yet how timidly he seems to speak, when it is a question of his persevering to the end! *I run not as at an uncertainty*, he says when he is contemplating his future reward; but he is obliged to add words expressive of his uncertainty in himself: *but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others I myself should become a castaway*.[3] It was this same fear of himself that made him long for the end of the struggle, lest by its being prolonged the danger to his perseverance might be increased.

It is for this reason, namely the chance of our falling away

[1] 1 Cor. x. 12. [2] Phil. ii. 12. [3] 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.

from God if we are not very cautious, that we are so constantly admonished about the necessity of watching. We must never be off our guard, for it may be that in an unprovided moment an attack may come and we may yield under it. *Be sober and watch; for your adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist ye strong in faith.*[4] And it is with reference to the awful consequences of not persevering, that the Watchman of Israel is commissioned to give this solemn warning: *If I shall say to the just that he shall surely live, and he, trusting in his justice, commit iniquity, all his justice shall be forgotten, and in his iniquity which he hath committed, in the same shall he die.*[5] See the dreadful consequence of not persevering. The merits of a long career of fidelity all melt away at once, and are forgotten by God on whatsoever day the just man fails in his perseverance.

Look at the contrast between Judas and St. Paul. What advantages had not the former over the latter, but how they differed in the end! There must have been something good and promising about Judas, that our Divine Lord should have named him as one amongst His chosen twelve. And at first he was faithful to the call. He, as well as Peter, had left all things to follow Christ, and was in return receiving here below a portion of the hundredfold, which had been promised to him in common with the others. For was it not worth more than a hundred times all that he had given up, to have the privilege of living in the continual company of Jesus, to converse with Him, to be able to study His character, to hear His lessons, and to witness His miracles? And what an honour for him to have heard from the lips of the Founder of the Church, words giving him a share in the plenitude of power with which he was invested over the sick and suffering, and a promise of greater power in absolving from sin! To have been seated with Him also at the last supper, to have received the Blessed Eucharist at the time of Its institution from the hand of our dearest Lord (though unfortunately in unworthy dispositions), this was an honour which might have well been envied by Angels! Yet, because perseverance was wanting, these dreadful words had to be spoken of him: *It were better for him, if that man had not been born.*[6] Better not to be born than to be a follower of Jesus! Better not to be born than to have been marked out as one of the first founders of the Church! Better not to have been born than to have had the power of miracles! Yes, my dear brethren, far better not to have been born than to have failed in perseverance.

[4] 1 Pet. v. 8. [5] Ezech. xxxiii. 13. [6] Matt. xxvi. 24.

On the other hand, look at St. Paul, whose first introduction to us is so unpromising: taking an active part in the murder of a saint, and afterwards breathing rage against the Church, for which our Blessed Lord had suffered and shed His Precious Blood. But when once grace is given to him, we hear not of his falling away. He endeavours by untiring labours to make amends for previous faults. By his zeal for souls, he makes restitution to God and to His Church for his early opposition to a cause whose holiness he did not at that time recognise; and by his fervour in pursuing his own perfection, and his watchfulness and constancy in prayer, he is doing what in him lies to secure his perseverance: *not*, he says, *as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend, wherein I am also apprehended by Christ Jesus.*[7] Whilst Judas who began so promisingly, ended so miserably, because he did not persevere, St. Paul from being a persecutor is changed by God's powerful Grace into an Apostle; and because he perseveres in his acquired justice, he is exalted even beyond other Apostles, so as to be associated with St. Peter in the chief foundationship of the Church.

Our Blessed Lord in His love for His disciples is especially anxious about their perseverance. He reminds them of its necessity when He associates it with salvation: He twice declares this fact when He says: *He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.*[8] Saddened by the fall of Judas, as we may well conceive He would have been, He prays that the same misfortune may not befall any other of His followers; for thus after His last supper does He address His Father: *Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name, whom Thou hast given Me, ... those whom Thou gavest Me have I kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition . . . . I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from evil.*[9] The fortitude manifested by the Apostles in their subsequent labours, and their shedding their blood for the sake of the Gospel, prove that the prayer was heard and granted.

In order to help us on in the way of our perseverance also, in how many ways does not our Divine Lord show His interest in our behalf, and His willingness to secure us the gift, if we will but do what is in our power, and what is required of us as a condition! Towards this end we can apply the immense power which is placed at our disposal in the exercise of prayer. As the promise has been made that whatever we pray for will be granted

[7] Phil. iii. 12. [8] Matt. x. 22, and xxiv. 13.
[9] John xvii. 11-15.

to us, provided that we pray as we ought, especially with perseverance and with confidence in the Holy Name of JESUS, certainly this most important of all gifts will not be refused. Perseverance in prayer is a prelude to perseverance in grace. It is also in order to help us to the attainment of perseverance, that our most merciful Saviour has instituted the Holy Sacraments, and has through them placed so rich a treasure at our disposal. They are intimately associated with our perfection, and therefore with our perseverance. By them we obtain grace, or an increase of grace, and are preserved against the loss of grace. Between the time of Baptism, which is given to us at the outset of life, and Extreme Unction, which is intended as a special help at the end of life, to how many dangers are we not exposed of falling away, but how many corresponding helps do we not receive in these several channels of Divine Grace, Fountains of our Saviour's love and power, from which we are commanded to draw waters with an abundance of confidence and joy! What anxiety, then, can they be said to manifest for their perseverance, who are heedless about prayer and the Sacraments?

All the admonitions which are assiduously given to us against evil company and occasions of sin, are directed towards securing our perseverance. We are weak, indeed, and easily overcome in the time of temptation: we carry our virtue, such as it is, in very frail vessels; and if we willingly expose ourselves to danger, what wonder that we perish in it, and have to pay the fearful penalty of the loss of perseverance! We cannot, then, be too careful in guarding the treasure that is committed to us, and we must show that we appreciate its value by our watchfulness. If it were to please Almighty God to send down now an Angel amongst us, laden with the secrets of eternity, and if he were authorised to stand forward in the midst of you, even as I am now standing in this chair of truth, and to mark out all amongst us who are now in a state of grace, with what anxiety we should each of us expect the notice which he would take of us, when our turn came to be singled out! Important as such a distinction would be, it would after all be by no means the most important decision which could concern us. It is a great thing to be in the grace of God, and is precious beyond all the treasures of the world. But, if after all, one falls away, what will it avail in the end, if we are then found wanting? Wherefore we might ask such an Angel to tell us something more, and might say to him, or I might be commissioned to say it in your name: O blessed Spirit! before thou returnest to thy home of bliss, reveal to us yet one more secret: mark out for us who amongst us will ultimately be saved. O,

my dear brethren! I hear his answer, and I know what it is; and I am authorised to communicate it to you, even upon a higher sanction than that of an Angel, for it is upon the sanction of our future Judge. And the answer is this: *He that perseveres to the end, he shall be saved.*

II. With regard to the attainment of this most important of all graces, final perseverance, there are certain practical truths which we must bear in mind, and the recollection of these truths will certainly be a help towards securing it. First of all we must not forget that it is *difficult* to persevere. It is difficult, and very difficult. But this is exactly what we should expect, when we bear in mind what is the necessary and immediate result of perseverance, namely our eternal salvation. It is difficult to be saved, and therefore it must be difficult to persevere faithfully to the end, because those who persevere are saved. Heaven suffers violence, but Heaven is the necessary reward of perseverance, and therefore perseverance demands violence. We must be constantly making efforts, and this is difficult to do. We must be continually on our guard, and this constant watchfulness is contrary to our natural proneness to self-indulgence, and therefore must cost us a great deal. Our weakness also is so great, and our enemies are so powerful, that there is always a danger of their conquering and of our being subdued. And the length of time that is possibly before us adds to the difficulty. If we knew that we had but one day to labour in, and that all depended upon that one day's labour, we might brace ourselves up, and nobly face all the difficulties of that short period. But it may be that we shall have years before us, and how can we go on for such a length of time, persevering steadily and faithfully in all that is required of us! With the feeling of this difficulty in our mind, may we not exclaim with the holy impatience of St. Paul, when he felt within himself the struggle between the law of duty and the law of sin: *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!*[10]

O, my dear brethren, does it not seem discouraging rather than cheering, to press such a thought upon you? Why should we, who are ministers and spokesmen of a good and merciful God, say that which may seem to intimidate, rather than that which ought to urge you confidently forward? Yet, bear with me. It is a necessary thought, and a first principle. You are not to dwell upon it, as if it were the only principle which concerns your perseverance in grace. It is difficult; but remember also that it is *not impossible* to persevere. Almighty God commands us to persevere, but He never commands what is impos-

[10] Rom. vii. 24.

sible. Therefore we can persevere; and the knowledge of this possibility at once diminishes the difficulty. Others have done it, and cannot you therefore do it?[11] Others have persevered, because they knew that they had something difficult to do, and it was this very knowledge that made them persevere. The difficulty made them cautious, and caution saved them. Suppose two men have to make a journey through a forest infested with robbers. One of them is aware of the danger, arms himself, and procures a bodyguard to protect him. The other knows nothing of the real case, and walks heedlessly along. Which of the two, think you, is most likely to share the fate of the traveller from Jerusalem to Jericho, to fall among the robbers and be brought to ruin? To be forewarned is to be forearmed; and the knowledge of a danger is the first step in being secure against it. Therefore, admitting that there is danger and difficulty attending our perseverance, let us not be dismayed; for although difficult it is quite possible.

Now I may lead you another step forward, and assure you that, considering all the circumstances, perseverance is even *easy* of attainment. How is this, my dear brethren? Am I not contradicting myself, when I begin by telling you that perseverance is difficult, and now say that it is easy? There is no contradiction. Both statements are true. It is difficult in one sense: it is easy in another. It is difficult when you consider your own weakness and instability, and the power and obstinacy of your enemies. But, then, you are not alone. You have upon your side more than you have against you. When the servant of the Prophet Eliseus once saw his master surrounded by the forces which his enemies had sent to apprehend him, he cried out in alarm: *Alas! alas! alas! my Lord, what shall we do?* But Eliseus prayed that his eyes might be opened; and the servant then saw that the mountain on which they were was full of horses, and that there were chariots of fire round about the prophet; and he saw that what his master said to him was true: *Fear not, for there are more with us than with them.*[12] So is it the case with us; there are more to help us towards attaining to our perseverance than to prevent us. When St. Teresa was engaged in the work of the foundation of her convents, calculating her slight resources, she used to say: Poor Teresa, and a few ducats, what can she do? But encouraging herself by the recollection of the help given by Him for whom she was labouring, she would nobly add: Teresa, and a few ducats, and God into the bargain, what can she not do? Why, then, should we be faint-hearted at the

[11] Nonne tu poteris quod isti et istæ? St. Aug. [12] 4 Kings vi. 15-17.

prospect of our perseverance, when we remember that we have God labouring for us and with us? *If God be for us, who is against us?*[13]

Nay, more: having begun to speak upon the possibility and the easiness of perseverance, I will be bold to add that, if we will it, our perseverance is even *certain*. If I am to give reasons for this assertion, the first that I will give is to be found in the words of our text. It is not I, but it is St. Paul, or rather it is Almighty God Himself who, through St. Paul, says to us: *We are confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus.* And I may point to St. Paul's own example, who, at the same time that he expressed apprehension at his possible falling away, did not hesitate to express certainty as to his ultimate success: *I so run not as at an uncertainty.*[14] And he elsewhere says: *For I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have intrusted to Him against that day.*[15] And a little further on he adds: *As to the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day.*[16] When you feel confident and certain that you can do a work, you do not fail in your attempt. It is they who hesitate, that are found to come badly off in their effort. You remember the beautiful instance of the devout women going to visit the tomb of their Crucified Lord on the day of the Resurrection. They start furnished with everything necessary to anoint His sacred Body, and although there was a great, and to their weak power an insurmountable, obstacle in the way, they go on, just mentioning the difficulty, but full of confidence that they will not be disappointed in the object of their visit: *Who will roll us back the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre?*[17] But what was the result? *Looking, they saw the stone rolled back;* and they are rewarded more fully than they had expected, for they see the Angel and hear the glad tidings of the Resurrection. So must we go forward with perfect confidence that we shall not be disappointed. God and His holy Angels will be with us on our way, and we shall be sure to arrive safely at our journey's end.

That beautiful and practical book, the *Following of Christ*,[18] tells us of a certain person who oftentimes doubted whether he were in a state of grace or not, and who once fell prostrate in the Church, and said thus: 'O that I might know whether I should persevere in virtue to the end of my life!' And he heard inwardly in his soul the answer of our Lord saying: 'What wouldst thou do

[13] Rom. viii. 31. [14] 1 Cor. ix. 26. [15] 2 Tim. i. 12.
[16] Ibid. iv. 8. [17] Mark xvi. 3. [18] Book I. xxv.

if thou knewest thou shouldst persevere? Do now as thou wouldst then do, and thou shalt be safe.' Immediately he was comforted, and all his doubtfulness ceased. This is exactly what we ought to do. We must go forward with the fullest confidence that Almighty God, who has made us in order that we may be saved, and who grants salvation to those only who persevere, will Himself enable us to attain to the reward which He has prepared for us. We have the testimony of a great Saint, St. Alphonso Liguori, that more souls are lost through despondency than through presumption. We must be careful not to presume, because we know our own weakness; but we must be most careful not to be faint-hearted, because we know the power of Him who labours with us. When we know that Heaven is ours, and must be ours, we shall live in a manner worthy of our inheritance; and with our affections raised above earthly things, we shall move on towards our true Home, and the blessing of final perseverance which St. Peter invokes upon us will be ours. *The God of all Grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, will Himself perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you: to Him be glory and empire for ever and ever. Amen.*[19]

[19] 1 Pet. v. 10.

SERMON LXIX.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

EXERCISE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

Our conversation is in Heaven.

THESE words of the holy Apostle, which occur in this day's Epistle, express what is both the privilege and the duty of a Christian. It is his privilege to have his conversation in Heaven, because by virtue of his calling he has so much to connect him with Heaven. He has been purchased for it at a great price. He has at his disposal Sacraments and other helps which are always urging him on towards Heaven. He has the patronage and the example of Angels and Saints, with whom he holds a fellowship and a communion, and to whom he addresses himself, as they look down upon him from Heaven. And he already has his own place prepared there, to which he is always entitled to look with confidence, as he raises up his thoughts towards his future Home, and, according to the advice of the Apostle, seeks *the things that are above, and not those that are upon the earth.*[1] And it is his duty. For as Heaven is his end, that for which he knows that he is created, he is bound to aspire to it, to live here below a life not unworthy of his high destiny, to do the will of God on earth as it is done in Heaven, to practise prayer and obedience, because of our *reward which is very great in Heaven.*[2]

There are many ways in which this privilege and duty can be exercised. But amongst them all, I will single out one for your recommendation to-day. It is a practice in which we raise ourselves towards Heaven, and thus bring down Heaven upon ourselves; a practice which Saints have loved, and which has helped to make them Saints; one in which all the noble powers of the soul are directed towards God, their best and only true Object: in which faith and hope and love are fixed upon One, who alone can give reality to their acts: in which every virtue is encouraged, and by means of which sin is made to be an impossibility. I mean the exercise of the Presence of God. We will try clearly to understand in principle, and will resolve faithfully to carry out

[1] Col. iii. 2. [2] Matt. v. 12.

in practice, this holy exercise; and we shall be able to say of it what the wise man said of Wisdom: *All good things have come to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands.*[3] The Apostle's motto will then be truly our own. Our conversation will be in Heaven, when we have learnt to realise the truth, the practice, and the advantage of this important exercise.

I. First, with regard to the principle of the exercise of the Presence of God. Faith assures us of the truth of God's Presence everywhere. It follows from the infinitude of His Perfections; and this special Attribute is what is called the Immensity of God. By virtue of this Attribute, God is at one and the same time in all and in each of His creatures. In His Immensity God is in space, what in His Eternity He is in time. As, because He is Eternal, there never was, nor will be, nor can be, a moment in which God can be considered as not existing; so, because of His Immensity, no point of space can be conceived in which God is not present. His presence in creation follows from the fact of His being Creator; for the creature cannot exist independently of Him, but He is with it to sustain and preserve it. Therefore our body, our soul, our life, our powers of thought and of action, our death, our position in time and eternity, all that we are and have and ever shall be, all are influenced by Him, and He is ever present with us, ruling and noticing every detail and incident that concerns us.

The Sacred Scriptures, which are everywhere bringing home to us practical lessons, remind us constantly of this very important truth of the Presence of God. Upon the first of the great Patriarchs, Abraham, Almighty God imposes this exercise as a duty connected with his perfection, when He says to him: *Walk in My Presence, and be perfect.*[4] In the book of Job, we read of a description of God, wherein it is said of Him: *He is higher than heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.*[5] Beautifully does the Psalmist declare this Immensity of God, when He cries out to Him: *Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy Face? If I ascend into Heaven, Thou art there: if I descend into hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.*[6] And our dear Lord, too, presses the same lesson upon us, when He speaks of the tender watchful care of Providence over each of His creatures: how the birds of the air and the lilies of the field are arrayed in all their beauty by Him;[7] and that not a sparrow falls to the ground without His

[3] Wisd. vii. 11. [4] Gen. xvii. 1. [5] Job xi. 8.
[6] Ps. cxxxviii. [7] Matt. vi. 26.

notice, and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered by Him.[8] And the Apostle, St. Paul, inculcates the same truth not only when he reminds us, as he does to-day, that *our conversation is in Heaven*, but when he says to the Romans that *of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things*;[9] and when in his address to the learned men in the Areopagus of Athens, he tell them of a God unknown and forgotten by them, *in whom we live, and move, and have our being*.[10]

This Presence of God, then, of which our belief in God's existence assures us, does not mean simply that God is always present with us; because this is a truth and a fact which we cannot affect or control. Whether we think of it and admit of it, or do not do so, yet the reality remains the same, and God is present all the while. But it means especially an act upon our part by which we make ourselves mindful of that Presence: by which we are present with Him in our thoughts and affections, and by which we acknowledge upon our part, what He never ceases for an instant to realise, that as His creatures we are ever with Him, and that as our Creator He is ever with us.

In principle, therefore, and in theory the Presence of God at all times and in every place is and must be admitted; but in practice how different is the case! There is an expression used by the Psalmist which fitly describes the conduct of most men with regard to this truth, when he calls this world *the earth of forgetfulness*.[11] Forgetfulness does not imply ignorance, but previous knowledge. We cannot be said to forget what we never knew, but we do forget many things that we have known for want of keeping them before our mind. This is just the way in which Almighty God is treated. He is known, but not thought of; or He is thought of now and then, but too habitually forgotten. This is a fault which we must try to correct, and therefore we must proceed to study the practice of the Presence of God: that is to say, we must take steps towards carrying out in reality what we cannot help admitting in theory.

II. As this holy and practical exercise has immediate reference to Almighty God, it implies in the first place, acts of those three theological virtues which have God directly for their object. We must, therefore, practise acts of faith, hope, and love. And first of all come acts of faith. We have already said that faith in the existence of God necessarily implies a belief in His Presence with us at all times and in every place. This is a necessary truth. It can never avail us anything to try

[8] Matt. x. 29. [9] Rom. xi. 36. [10] Acts xvii. 21.
[11] Terra oblivionis: Ps. lxxvii. 13.

and forget it; because forgetfulness will not destroy the reality. It is the fool only who saith in his heart: *There is no God.*[12] He says it, not in his mind and intellect, as if he believed it as a truth, because error cannot be an object of our understanding, but he only says it in his heart. His wish, the wish of his heart is, that there might be no God to punish him for his folly and his disobedience. But this wish cannot destroy God, nor can it drive Him away from witnessing every sin that the foolish and forgetful man commits. The wise man, on the other hand, cherishes this remembrance. He lives in God's Presence, and thus preserves himself in His Grace and friendship. Our duty is to be wise and thoughtful: never to lose sight of a fact which, whether we think of it or not, is still equally true. Our God is not like that one to whom St. Paul found an altar erected in Athens, an unknown God. Our first duty towards Him is to know Him, and therefore the acknowledgment of His Presence flows immediately from the belief in His existence.

What we must, therefore, habituate ourselves to do, is, in every place, and in every action that we are performing, to recognise God as being close by our side. We may bring our imagination to assist our faith; not that our faith on that account is merely imaginary; but we must convince ourselves that what a Pagan philosopher, Seneca, said was a great incentive to the practice of virtue, namely fancying that we have always by our side a discreet witness and guide, is actually true, not only with reference to our Angel Guardian, who is always with us; but more than this: every good act is witnessed approvingly, and every disobedient act is at once censured by Him who is now our Witness, and infallibly will be one day our Judge. Let us think of and remember this, and in a spirit of faith frequently say: O my God! I believe in Thee, and I know and feel that Thou art now close before me, and that Thou seest and watchest everything that I am doing. Such acts will lead towards forming a habit, and we shall be helping ourselves, as Saints have done, to live in God's Presence and be always faithful.

Acts of hope, also, are implied by a practical belief in the presence of God. It is He who hath sent us into this world to do His work, but He does not leave us to work alone. He is always with us, and labours with us. Therefore there can be no trial too great for our strength, when we remember who bears it with us, or at least who is ready to bear it with us, if we only address ourselves to Him. This was the support of the Psalmist, and the impulse which urged him on in his career of obedience:

[12] Ps. xiii.

To Thee have I lifted up my eyes who dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, as the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes unto the Lord our God until He have mercy upon us.[13] And in the beautiful Complin Psalm, the *Qui habitat*, he breaks out repeatedly into acts of the fullest confidence that, because God is always by his side, no evil can befall him. And thus does God answer his address of hope: *He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him: I am with him in tribulation: I will deliver him, and I will glorify him.*[14] It is especially in the form of ejaculatory prayer that we are thus to manifest our hope and confidence; for prayer is always the language of hope. What the disciples of our Divine Lord did when He was with them in the boat, is what we must do in the midst of our occupations and trials: comfort ourselves with the assurance that there is One close by our side to whom, when the trial seems most pressing, we can call for help: *Lord, save us; we are perishing!* He will prove that He is not forgetful of us nor at a distance, for there will quickly follow a great calm.

But it is especially in acts of love that the exercise of the presence of God is to be kept alive within us. Faith and hope are preludes to that love which is greater than themselves. Love always desires union with its object, and the presence of God implies that we are with Him and He with us. It is about this that God is especially anxious, and therefore He has declared that He rules us by a law of love. What our dear Lord in His last address to His Apostles said to them, is what our good God is always saying to us: *Abide in Me: and I in you.*[15] In His prayer to His Father, He even expresses the desire that the union between Himself and those who follow Him may be like to the union between the Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity: *that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee: that they also may be one in Us.*[16] How truly do we not carry out this desire of His, when we live in His presence and thus keep ourselves united with Him! How touching is the declaration which our Blessed Lord is said to have made in the Revelations of St. Gertrude! 'There are two places upon earth in which I love to dwell: one is in the Blessed Sacrament, and the other is in the heart of Gertrude.' This exactly expresses what is our good God's dealing with His faithful children. He loves to dwell in the midst of them, and He loves to be recognised and to be conversed with. Surely we cannot pretend to have any real love for

[13] Ps. cxxii.
[14] Ibid. xc.
[15] John xv. 4.
[16] Ibid. xvii. 21.

God, if we forget and ignore His Presence, and thus keep Him practically at a distance from us.

There is another mode of effectually realising the Presence of God with us, and that is the practice, so strongly recommended by Saints and all spiritual writers, of attending to purity of intention in all our actions. As God knows and sees each action that we perform, we ought to know and to see Him in its performance. Nothing does or can escape His all-searching eye; and it behoves us to acknowledge this truth by offering each of our works to Him, performing it with the full recollection that He witnesses what we are doing, and that He will one day judge us by our works. As our Divine Lord, when upon earth, never for an instant was deprived of the Beatific Vision, and by virtue of the perfect harmony between His own will and that of His Father, was able to say: *I always do the things which please My Father*,[17] so ought we to strive never to lose the recollection of that Presence of which our faith assures us, and in all our actions show our conformity with the will of God. However distracting our work may be, and however deeply it may absorb our attention and fix our affection, God is not to be forgotten, nor are His claims upon our obedience to be overlooked. In always doing what God wills, and in doing it as He wills, we are walking in His Presence, and are pursuing the path of our perfection.

One more practice there is which is much to be recommended in connexion with the exercise of the Presence of God, and this is to make now and then an act of solitude, by which we for the time being strive as effectually as possible to exclude every other thought but that of God, and consider ourselves and God alone as existing. God is in reality closer to us than any other being; but our habitual fault is, that we allow creatures to intervene, and to occupy the place which really belongs to God. It is this fault which we correct, when by an act of interior recollection we exclude the creature, and draw ourselves closely to Him, in whom we live, and move, and are. How often may we not have reason to censure ourselves in the words of the Patriarch Jacob, and say: *Truly is the Lord in this place, and I knew it not!*[18] An act of this kind made from time to time will tend to create in us a habit of recollectedness, and will enable us to share in the blessing promised through the Prophet: *I will lead her into solitude, and I will speak to her heart.*[19] This act has been the delight of Saints: it is this which has given them a foretaste of Heaven, which has made them look down upon all earthly things as valueless, and has made them feel as St. Bernard used to feel,

[17] John viii. 29. [18] Gen. xxviii. 16. [19] Osee ii. 14.

never less alone than when alone. In the spiritual world as in the material world a real void is not to be found: when the creature is driven out, Almighty God is ready to enter in, and He then occupies the place nearest to our heart, and we find ourselves at rest with Him. Thus may we practically carry out this true and holy exercise of the Presence of God, and make our conversation to be in Heaven.

III. Now for our further encouragement let us enumerate some amongst the many and rich advantages which must be the result of conversing with Heaven, in the exercise of the Presence of God.

The first advantage is that such a practice duly persevered in will make sin an impossibility to us. For how could we dare to sin, that is to say to break God's commandments, when we are fully deliberating upon the fact of His standing by and witnessing our action! It is in order to sin the more freely that the fool denies in his heart the existence of the God who is to judge him, and that he removes God from his sight and his thought. But God is not mocked. There He stands all the time, knowing and seeing the sin that is committed, and recording it for a future testimony against him that commits it. But he that is wise does not attempt to close his eyes against a fact which cannot be destroyed: which is equally true whether it be thought of or forgotten; and which, as it is a necessary truth, it is of so much importance never to lose sight of. If you wish to sin, says St. Augustine, try and find out a place where God cannot see you, and there do what you will.[20] But where can such a place be found? We must fear God in public, the same holy Doctor elsewhere says, and we must fear Him in private. If you are out walking, He sees you. If the sun is shining, He sees you. If it is dark at night, He sees you. If you enter into your private chamber, He sees you. Fear Him who is always careful in watching you, and whilst you fear Him dare not to offend Him.[21]

A second advantage is that the recollection of the Presence of God is a great encouragement under every temptation. As servants are most faithful and active in their work when their master's eye is upon them, and as soldiers will fight most bravely when their general is by their side leading them on in the battle, so must we ever assure ourselves that in our labours and the trials to which our fidelity may be exposed we are not alone, but He for whom we are working and in whose cause we are struggling is close at hand, ready to reward us if we persevere in

[20] Aug. de Spiritu et Animâ. [21] Serm. cxxxii. ed. Gaume.

our duty, but a witness of our disloyalty if we fail. How encouraging to the Apostles must not have been the assurance given to them by our dear Lord, that He would never be absent from them in their sufferings! They were to have great things to undergo for His sake, and the world was to make them an object of its hatred and persecution, but the words: *I am with you all days even to the end of the world*, would have ever resounded in their ears, and inspired them with courage. What the good king Josaphat did in the time of trial is what we must do. A great multitude was assembled against him, and when, in measuring his own numbers he found them so inadequate to meet the host that was invading him, he cried out to God: *O God! we have not strength enough to be able to resist this multitude, which cometh violently upon us. But as we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to Thee.*[22] If the exercise of the presence of God makes sin impossible, as we have seen it does, it must keep us faithful on all those occasions in which we are exposed to the danger of sin. The Psalmist gives this as the reason of his fidelity in observing the law of God, when he says: *I have kept Thy commandments and Thy testimonies, because all my ways are in Thy sight.*[23]

This holy exercise has also this great advantage, that it helps us most effectually in the duty of prayer. Prayer of its very nature implies an act in which we are conversing with God, and are therefore engaged in His Presence. When the wise man tells us that before prayer we must *prepare our soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God*,[24] he is especially exhorting to that act of recollection of God's Presence, which is always prescribed as a necessary prelude in this sacred work. And so our Divine Lord, when He is giving one of His practical instructions on prayer, inculcates this preliminary act: *Thou, when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee.* And He proceeds to show how in prayer our conversation is in Heaven, by the way in which He opens His own model of prayer: *Our Father who art in Heaven.*[25] Certainly, if we made it our study to think at all times of God's holy Presence about us, we should not find it such an effort to keep our thoughts fixed upon God during the few moments which from time to time we devote to prayer. The reason why our minds wander so much during that time, is because we do not at other times remember what our Faith assures us of, that God is with us,

[22] 2 Par. xx. 12.
[23] Ps. cxviii. 168.
[24] Ecclus. xviii. 23.
[25] Matt. vi. 6-9.

close by us, and we with Him. Try to be more recollected out of the time of prayer, and you are sure to be less distracted in the time of prayer.

The exercise of the Presence of God also gives to us a foretaste of Heaven. What constitutes the happiness of Heaven is the Presence of God in that kingdom of His Glory. The just rejoice in the sight of God, and are abounding with the delight which the Beatific Vision affords them. They possess God; they are united with Him; they see Him, and they rejoice in His Presence. Such is Heaven. If we, by cultivating this holy exercise, also live in His Presence, is not our conversation also in Heaven? But if we never think of this Presence, how can we pretend to be aspiring to that future reward for which the Psalmist thirsts when he says: *What have I in Heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth, Thou God of my heart and my portion for ever!*[26] Deservedly, indeed, is the pain of loss the great punishment in eternity for those who, during life, allowed themselves to be led into sin by the forgetfulness of the presence of Him, who was a witness of their unfaithfulness during life, and who was their Judge after death. *The sinner hath provoked the Lord: God is not before his eyes: his ways are filthy at all times . . . . . He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: He hath turned away His face not to see to the end.*[27] This is the conduct of the forgetful sinner during life. And what is the consequence after death? *Why hast Thou forgotten me?* does the soul then cry out in its anguish: *and why do I go on mourning, whilst my enemy afflicteth me: whilst my bones are broken, my enemies who trouble me have reproached me, whilst they say to me day by day: Where is thy God?*[28] Thus by God's retributive justice, in which He gives to all according to their works, He rewards by His Presence in Heaven those who during life had sought that Presence upon earth, and He punishes by eternal separation and loss of Himself, those who never valued that Presence in the days of their probation.

Our life here below is intended by our good and merciful Creator to resemble our life in that happy eternity for which He has destined us. We are made to possess God hereafter, but He wishes us to possess Him also here below: now less perfectly, then more completely; as we can see Him, now in a dark manner, then more clearly, and face to face. It is in the exercise of the Presence of God that you will in one way be anticipating the future privilege which is in store for you. Try it, persevere in it, and you will find its many advantages and bless-

[26] Ps. lxxvii. [27] Ibid. ix. [28] Ibid. xli.

ings. And you will have reason to thank God, that having made you for Himself, He will have helped you to secure the end destined for you, will have given you a share in the work of Saints, and will have enabled you to have your conversation in Heaven in the sweet, holy, and practical exercise of the Presence of God.

[For Sundays which may intervene before the last Sunday after Pentecost, see the Sundays after Epiphany.]

SERMON LXX.

TWENTY-FOURTH AND LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

HEAVEN.

Giving thanks to God the Father, who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the Saints in light.

THESE words of the holy Apostle, brought before us by the Church on this last Sunday after Pentecost, are very exalting and encouraging. They are words which are calculated to make us look forward with a generous and cheerful confidence to the future which is before us, and make us lift up our hearts from earthly things, in order to contemplate the reward which is in store for us in the bright and happy home towards which we are directing our pilgrim steps. It is the last Sunday also of the month of November, a month in which the doctrine of the Communion of Saints is so practically brought before us. We commenced the month with the glorious Festival of All Saints, and were then moved to consider the glory to which those blessed citizens of Heaven have already been admitted. Under the influence of their example we could not refrain from asking ourselves the question, whether we could not do what they had done, and we felt resolved to make the generous attempt. We may hope that their prayers have been aiding us throughout the month; and now that we are about to conclude it, and at the commencement, next Sunday, of a new Ecclesiastical year, shall have our thoughts drawn more directly to other holy subjects, it will be well to cheer ourselves on by listening to the call of the Apostle, who bids us thank God for making us partakers of the lot of the Saints, and to take a glance at that light and glory which is already theirs in Heaven, and which we hope will one day be revealed also in ourselves.

To Heaven, then, we will turn our thoughts to-day, and we will contemplate the joys of our own real future home. It is, indeed, an ennobling and an encouraging thought: one which must serve as a preventive against sin, and which will draw us into closer union with God. It is a thought which will raise us above the things of this world, and will make us dwell amongst

the Saints: which will make us seek and relish the things that are above, not those which are upon earth. And when our souls are filled with the ideas which such a contemplation will bring with it, we shall be inclined to call out as St. Peter did, when he was allowed to have a passing view of our Lord in Glory attended by two of His Saints: *Lord, it is well for us to be here.* We shall be unwilling to return to the cold earth with all its cares and vanities, and with St. Ignatius the Martyr shall declare: How vile does earth appear to me, when I contemplate Heaven! Let us quicken our faith, then, and warm ourselves into a more earnest and constant fidelity, by the view of the lot of the Saints in light, of which our good God has made us worthy to be partakers.

I. What is it that we believe regarding Heaven? Faith tells us that we are created for it: that when God made us, and sent us into this world, it was His will that we should remain here but for a short time, and that upon the fulfilment of certain duties which He has imposed upon us, we should be admitted into Heaven, and be happy with Him for all eternity. Life everlasting is an article in the Creed, and by it we are taught that the just shall live for ever in Heaven, seeing, loving, and possessing God. Therefore Heaven is ours in prospect; it is intended for each of us; it is our true home. The Angels who fell from their principality have there left many vacant seats to be filled up by those who are faithful to God, and one of these places is destined for each of us.

I cannot describe the beauty of Heaven; for it is beyond the power of the human imagination to do so. St. Paul, who had been admitted to see something of its glory, declares that he could not describe it; and that it had never been in the power of any man to do so: *That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.*[1] Being an object of faith, it is beyond the province of the senses. The imagination works through the senses; but Heaven is nothing imaginary: it is a reality which we now know by faith, and which we are intended one day to know by actual possession. But though we cannot describe what Heaven is, yet being made for it, we all have some kind of instinctive conception of what it is. Our soul, which is always aspiring after happiness, and which cannot be satisfied with anything that can be obtained here below, tells us that there is a place where supreme happiness can be obtained, without fear of its ever being again lost. This is the end for which God has

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 9.

made us, and in making us for this end, He has not left us ignorant of that which it so much concerns us to know. He has made us know Him, and to love Him, and to serve Him in this life, and to be happy with Him for ever in the next. Our conscience tells us of our present duty, and the aspirations of our soul convince us of our future reward.

The happiness to which we are aspiring in Heaven will consist in seeing and possessing God, the sovereign good and sovereign beauty: in loving Him and being loved by Him. Every faculty will then be fully satisfied. The understanding, which here below is searching after truth, and oftentimes with fruitless anxiety, will then be fixed with unceasing and unchangeable rest in the contemplation of one object, its God and its all. The will, which is so apt to be attaching itself now to creatures which only torture it by their incapacity of answering its cravings, will then find its endless repose in union with the God of love. The memory even will be rewarded by the recollection of past favours now so little appreciated, but then seen in all their richness, and valued because they have been the means of gaining the reward which will then be possessed for ever; and with joy will the soul look back also upon those labours and penitential acts which were exercised through the hope of future glory. O happy penance! did St. Peter of Alcantara exclaim in a vision to St. Teresa after his death: O happy penance! which has purchased for me so great a weight of glory. The law which commands us to love God with our whole heart and soul, which, alas! is so feebly obeyed by us in this cold world, will then be fully complied with, and we shall understand how truly love is its own reward. And hereto will be added the feeling that all this is for ever: that every uncertainty and fear of loss is now removed; and that as long as God is God, He will be our God, and we shall be the objects of His Love. Well does the Psalmist say: *I shall be satiated when Thy glory shall appear.*[2]

Then, as far as a created intellect can comprehend the infinite, will our understanding comprehend God: *We see now in a dark manner, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known.*[3] The mystery of the eternal existence of God: the Processions of Persons in the Blessed Trinity: the eternal Generation of the Word, and the condescension by which It humbled Itself and became Flesh: the Wisdom of God in the designs of Providence: the perfect consistency between His Justice and Mercy, in the rewards and punishments bestowed upon the good and the wicked: the recon-

[2] Ps. xvi. [3] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

ciliation between His foreknowledge and man's free-will, between the power of grace and human merit: the marvellous influence of prayer over the Will of God;—these, and all other truths which are now objects of our faith, but which often perplex the mind, when we venture to dwell speculatively upon them, will be seen in that light which enlighteneth every soul in the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision. Then shall we also see the glory bestowed upon the Saints, and shall admire their distribution, according to the degree of grace in which they had been in this world, among the different orders of the hierarchy of Angels. Above them all we shall see their glorious Queen, our own Mother, Mary. O, my dear brethren, what joy to contemplate her happiness, to see the high degree of glory, short only of what is infinite, bestowed upon her because of her Immaculate Conception, her Divine Maternity, her plenitude of grace, her absolute sinlessness, her constant fidelity, her daily increase in merit, and her final perseverance! Then shall we understand what a share she had had, by her prayers and patronage, in gaining our salvation and our admittance into the kingdom over which she is reigning as Queen of Angels and of Saints. Higher still, and seated at the right hand of the Father, shall we see, as St. Stephen saw on his entrance into Heaven, *Jesus, the author and finisher of faith*,[4] upon whose Face the Angels look with rapture. The Sacred Humanity, before which, concealed in the Blessed Sacrament, we have so often knelt in adoration, by which we have been enriched in Holy Communion, will be displayed before us for our everlasting view, in all the fulness of the Glory with which It is now crowned, in compensation for the humility with which It was invested, when accomplishing upon earth the work of our Redemption. The aspiration with which we conclude the devout hymn of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, *Adoro Te devotè*, will then be realised. Jesus! whom I now see under a veil, grant that what I so thirst for may be vouchsafed to me, that seeing Thy face unveiled, I may be blest by the sight of Thy glory![5]

What a feeling of rapturous joy, on entering into Heaven, to

[4] Heb. xii. 2.

[5] Jesu! quem velatum nunc aspicio,
Oro, fiat illud, quod tam sitio!
Ut Te revelatâ cernens facie,
Visu sim beatus Tuæ gloriæ.

Jesu! whom for the present veil'd I see,
What I so thirst for, O, vouchsafe to me!
That I may see Thy countenance unfolding,
And may be blest Thy glory in beholding.
Caswall's translation.

be able to say: Here at last have I arrived at my true Home. I have found what my soul had longed for, and I am now to possess it for ever. What happiness to study the beauty of Heaven, to go from one place to another, following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and to say: This is mine! *This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, because I have chosen it.*[6] What a privilege, to be allowed to join in the songs of that blissful abode, and to take our share in the everlasting canticles, which will be ascending as a tribute of praise, thanksgiving, and love, before the throne of God! What a thrill will pervade us, when we feel that all love us and welcome us as their own into our common country, once the object of our anxious and uncertain hope, now the prize of our fidelity to a God, who has proved Himself so abundant in rewarding! *How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. . . . Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord; for ever and ever shall they praise Thee.*[7]

Remember, too, my dear brethren, that this is a reality which is now actually existing in regard to the many thousands of happy Saints whom the Church Militant has sent up into Heaven. Whilst we are thinking of Heaven, and are anticipating in our imagination the future glory which we trust will one day be revealed in us, they are now in possession and actual enjoyment of their eternal reward. Our own Angel-guardians are there; our Patron Saints are there; our holy Father St. Benedict, surrounded by his crown of brethren, is there. Apostles, Martyrs, Bishops, Priests, Virgins, holy and faithful children of the Church, who through many tribulations worked their way through this their scene of probation, and who by prayer and the help of the Sacraments gained their perseverance: they are there, revelling in the happiness to which, like ourselves, they once looked forward; and looking back now with joyful retrospect upon the labours and duties which are still our lot on our way towards joining them.

Now we feel that we can better understand God's infinite act in creating us: how He values our souls, preserves them with such care, and watches over them with such anxious love. Now we can understand why He has given each of us an angel to be ever by our side, to guard us in all our ways, and to shelter us from every danger. When we consider the immense and eternal happiness of Heaven for which we are destined, we can better see why our dearest Saviour vouchsafed to shed His most Precious Blood, in order to ransom and to save each soul. Now I see the

[6] Ps. cxxxi. [7] Ibid. lxxxiii.

full meaning of those words of our Divine Saviour: *What can it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?* For the whole world is not to be compared to Heaven, and each soul is destined for Heaven. No wonder, now, that the Church is so zealous and so anxious for the salvation of each single soul, because she knows its value and its eternal destiny. No wonder that, in season and out of season, she exhorts, rebukes, and presses with such earnestness the duties of prayer and the holy Sacraments, which are such helps towards Heaven. Well, indeed, might Saints give up everything for Christ's sake, when they were fully aware of the return He would make them hereafter; and well might they share in the sentiment of St. Paul, and regard all things as dirt in comparison with that surpassing love which gives a foretaste upon earth of the bliss of Heaven.

II. What is now so encouraging to us to remember is, that all this happiness can be ours, and is sure to be ours, if we will only do what we ought to do, and what we can do. In creating us for Heaven, Almighty God certainly has not placed an impossible end before us. The very fact of His having made us in order to possess Him here below in a partial manner, and hereafter in a more perfect manner, ought to convince us of the possibility of our one day realising that eternal joy, the thought of which is now so cheering to us. No enemy, no danger, no difficulty can stand in our way. In other matters, those that wish us ill can hurt us; in this they cannot. They may injure us in our riches, our character, our health, our life; but they cannot prevent our gaining Heaven. God and ourselves are the two that are here concerned; and *if God be with us who is against us?*[8] *He hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the Saints in light*, and therefore none can resist His will. With such a thought in our soul, does it not seem easy for us to gain the reward which is in store for us—to run on, like St. Paul, towards what is not an uncertainty, and to brace ourself up to the noble resolve of the Psalmist, when he said, *I have sworn, and I am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice. . . . I have inclined my heart to do Thy justifications for ever, because of the reward?*[9]

We are oftentimes told by Saints, who have themselves been generous and persevering in their duty to God, that it is despondency, rather than presumption, that keeps souls back from making progress towards Heaven. Now, in order that we may remove all faint-heartedness, and cheer ourselves on with greater confidence towards the prize that is held before us, let us calculate in a practical manner the chances that are in our favour, and

[8] Rom. viii. 31. [9] Ps. cxviii.

those that are against us, with reference to our realising our happy end, and one day gaining eternal possession of Heaven.

First of all, on our side we have all this: we have *Almighty God*, who has made us on purpose that we may be saved: who preserves us so carefully: who has redeemed us at so great a price: who coöperates with us so constantly and in so many ways, and who does not wish to be disappointed in a matter which so greatly concerns His own glory. Next, we have *the Saints of God*, who look upon us as their brethren, fighting in a cause dear to them, for which they themselves had upon earth fought so faithfully. They are not idle uninterested spectators of our struggle; but, being united with us in holy fellowship, they are influenced by the law of charity in our regard, and their own accidental glory and joy are increased by our success. Especially we have upon our side the powerful patronage of our Mother *Mary*—a patronage so powerful and so successful in making Saints, and in gaining conquests over our spiritual enemies. And we have those blessed Spirits, *our Angel-guardians*, given to us on purpose by the Almighty to guard us in all our ways, lest we should incur danger, and sent to minister to those who are to receive the inheritance of salvation. Such are those who are looking down upon us and helping us from Heaven.

Then, we have upon earth the all-powerful means of *Prayer*: that instrument which has such influence over the mind of God, and which brings help and grace streaming down upon the soul. We have *the Church* with all her appliances: especially her *holy Sacraments*, channels of Divine Grace, and links between the soul and its Creator. Prominently amongst these Mysteries of God's Love, we have the Adorable Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist, the Bread of the strong, instituted on purpose that the covenant connected with it be observed in our behalf, that whosoever eateth of it may live for ever, and that it may serve as a pledge of future glory. We have also upon earth that great advantage which comes to us through *the Communion of Saints*, through which reality we are helped by the prayers and good works of our fellow-labourers. Upon our side, also, and for our great spiritual benefit are ranked the *sufferings and trials*, to which in our intercourse with the world we are subjected, and so constantly exposed. These are intended by the world to do us harm, but they are blessed by the hand of God, and are turned into so many steps by which we can mount up towards Heaven. They form for us the opportunity of exercising that happy violence of which our Divine Lord has assured us the importance, and which succeeds in bearing away the prize.

May we not also humbly, but still hopefully, reckon upon our side, souls which we may happen to have been a means, in God's Providence, of serving through *the Spiritual or Corporal Works of Mercy?* Our Blessed Lord, Himself so merciful, has assured us of the immense efficacy of these good works; and they who have received them at our hands do not fail to invoke blessings upon us in return. *Souls in Purgatory*, for whom we have not failed to intervene, will not upon their part fail to intervene for us, and through a spirit of thankfulness will pray that we may share in the reward which is secured for themselves. Therefore we are not alone; but, with such powerful assistants and coöperators, we must be buoyed up with generous confidence; and with the spirit of soldiers who are running on towards certain victory, we shall with St. Paul *forget the things that are behind, and stretching forth to those that are before, press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus.*[10]

With all these upon our side, must we not be saved? Who can prevent us? and who are they that are opposed to us? First, there is *the Devil*, the spiritual enemy of mankind, who goes about, indeed, with activity, and oftentimes too successfully, seeking whom he may devour. But is not Almighty God more than a match for him? And what has this wicked spirit done that we should seek alliance with him, and prefer being under his control, rather than under allegiance to so good a God as we have to serve? Next, there is *the World*, with all its vanities, which seeks by falsehood and flattering promises to gain us over to itself, and to call us back in our heavenward career. But assuredly the Church, with all its means of defence and encouragement, is more powerful than the world, which is never to prevail against the fair spouse of our Divine Lord, who, Himself fighting on the side of the Church, bids us have confidence, because He has overcome the world.[11] Then *the Flesh*, with its degrading solicitations, strives to exert its influence, and offers the momentary pleasure which it pretends to afford instead of the delights which are in store both here and hereafter for those who love God and are faithful in His service. Surely against such an enemy the Sacraments can afford abundant security, and can scare it away into the darkness whence it has dared to emerge. Against these and other *temptations*, to which we know that we must be exposed in the service of God, prayer will always bring the answer which it brought to St. Paul, when he cried out in anguish for help: *My Grace is sufficient for thee.*[12] There is also possibly

[10] Phil. iii. 13. [11] John xvi. 33. [12] 2 Cor. xii. 9.

arrayed against us the tyranny of *bad habits*, from which it is so difficult to be thoroughly emancipated, and which tries to keep us under a subjugation, to which, perhaps, we had at one time too willingly submitted. But that watchfulness and resolution which are cultivated and strengthened by acts of self-study, and especially by frequent confession, will secure victory for every willing soul. Remember, too, that all these obstacles, so far from keeping us from Heaven, will, when overcome, as they can and will be by all our powerful aids, be additional occasions for triumph and reward.

Who, then, is to say that he cannot be saved? Who is to despond and be faint-hearted, when such an immense reward seems secured to us by so many pledges? *Give thanks to God the Father, who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light.* For we are already partakers of that happy lot, for which we have been created, and which has been purchased for us by Him, who came down from Heaven in order to take us by the hand and lead us thither. Which of us shall see it first? Which of us shall be admitted soonest to realise what we are now all picturing to ourselves as our home and our reward? How can we any longer allow ourselves to be grovelling upon earth, and to be fixing our affections upon what is so base and so unworthy of the claimants to so noble an inheritance? Lift up your hearts, and go courageously forward. Accept gladly the conditions that are imposed upon you, when you remember the greatness and the eternity of your reward. Keep the commandments: frequent the Sacraments: persevere in prayer: encourage yourself by the intercession and the example of those that have gone before you. If you are called upon to labour, as we all are, labour cheerfully. If you are called upon to suffer, suffer patiently. If you are called upon to make sacrifices, make them generously. The time of your trial is but short, and your reward is eternal. The prize is close within your reach; and whilst you are stretching out your hands to grasp it, it is your own good and generous God, who exhorts you not to turn back, or relax in your desires and efforts; and it is He that says to you, *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give to thee the crown of life.*[13]

WHICH MAY GOD GRANT TO US ALL! AMEN.

[13] Rev. ii. 10.

In Omnibus Glorificetur Deus! Amen.

THE END.

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Sw 35 SWEENEY, J.N.
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AUTHOR
Sermons for Sundays
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